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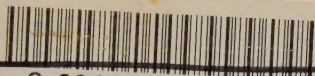
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EARLY
SHAKESPEARE

This new volume of *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* has two claims on the attention of anyone interested in Shakespeare's plays. First, by considering one stage of his career as a dramatist, it cuts across those habitual divisions into Comedies, Histories and Tragedies which derive authority from the editors of the posthumous *Collected Works* rather than from Shakespeare himself. In giving central importance to *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II* and *The Merchant of Venice*, plays written around 1595 and 1597, this book offers an assessment of the early Shakespeare which should stimulate fresh comparisons. Secondly the ten authors who have collaborated here use as many different approaches to the plays. Most books can present Shakespeare's writings only from a single aspect. This book is a collaborative venture; it presents the first ten years of Shakespeare's career from the viewpoints of ten scholars and critics with individual outlooks on Shakespearian theatre and literature.



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STRATFORD-UPON-AVON STUDIES 3

EARLY
SHAKESPEARE

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Preface

THIS new volume of *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* has two claims on the attention of anyone interested in Shakespeare's plays. First, by considering one stage of his career as a dramatist, it cuts across those habitual divisions into Comedies, Histories and Tragedies which derive authority from the editors of the posthumous collected *Works* rather than from Shakespeare himself. In giving central importance to *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II* and *The Merchant of Venice*, plays written around 1595 and 1597, this book offers an assessment of the early Shakespeare which should stimulate fresh comparisons. Secondly, the ten authors who have collaborated here use as many different approaches to the plays. While the study of Shakespeare becomes ever more detailed and more widely practised, most books can present his writings only from a single aspect; to demonstrate his manipulation of a special dramatic technique over against all that is now known of his works requires a whole volume; to relate the plays to a 'doctrine of nature', or to a group of political or social ideas, demands many years spent in the study of Elizabethan treatises and twentieth-century exegesis, with the result that many Shakespearian scholars and critics must inevitably pursue their own 'lines'.

This book is a collaborative venture: it presents the first ten years of Shakespeare's career from the viewpoints of ten scholars and critics with individual understanding in Shakespearian theatre and literature.

In planning this book we have not called for a single chapter that deals restrictedly with either of the two most commonly practised techniques of criticism—a study of imagery and recurrent words, and of the relation of dramatic themes to Elizabethan ideas of justice, nature, order and such concepts. But these methods, having been widely assimilated, are used incidentally in almost every chapter. Our collaborators have moved from these positions to others which accomplish much and promise more. Several practise a specifically theatrical criticism: R. A. Foakes, in the opening chapter, surveys Shakespeare's opportunities as a professional playwright (and some new assessments arise from this writer's work as editor of Henslowe's *Diary*); Moelwyn Merchant examines the

visual subtleties of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by studying stage-settings, illustrations and adaptations of the play; and one of the general editors recalls famous interpretations of the role of Shylock, from Macklin to Gielgud, relating the discoveries of actors of genius to an understanding of *The Merchant of Venice* as a whole. Shakespeare's techniques of presentation and of dramatic structure are variously examined by Harold Brooks, J. P. Brockbank and G. Lloyd Evans, one concentrating on a single work, *The Comedy of Errors*, another surveying the three plays concerning the reign of Henry VI, the third exploring the two-part play of *Henry IV*. Stage rhetoric and devices of utterance are studied by R. F. Hill in *Richard II*, and Shakespeare's development of his own mode of comedy by Frank Kermode. The influence of Robert Greene on Shakespeare's early writings is considered by Norman Sanders, while John Lawlor discusses *Romeo and Juliet* in the light of medieval and renaissance traditions of tragedy, and of Shakespeare's career as a whole; this chapter which views widely and precisely is placed at the centre of the book.

As in the earlier volumes of *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies* already published, each chapter has been provided with a pre-note which gives the factual information on which the following discourse depends and a guide for further reading and study. The texts quoted in each chapter are specified here, and the titles of scholarly or critical works referred to later by their authors' names. The texts used are the most responsible which are generally available; some have modernized, some 'old' spelling, but we have always used *u* and *v*, and *i* and *j*, in accordance with modern usage. Shakespeare is quoted from the Globe edition, unless otherwise noted—this procedure is in order to conform with the line-references of Bartlett's *Concordance* and of other general works.

It is proposed to extend the range of future *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies*, along the lines indicated in the preface to the first volume. *Contemporary Theatre*, which will appear in 1962, will offer historical perspectives to the theatre (mainly English) of this century.

The Shakespeare Institute
Stratford-upon-Avon

JOHN RUSSELL BROWN
BERNARD HARRIS

The Chronology of Shakespeare's Plays

Henry VI, Parts I, II, and III, 1589-91; *Richard III*, 1592-3; *The Comedy of Errors*, 1592-3; *Titus Andronicus*, 1593-4; *The Taming of the Shrew*, 1593-4; *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 1594-5; *Love's Labour's Lost*, 1594-5; *Romeo and Juliet*, 1595-6; *Richard II*, 1595-6; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1595-6; *King John*, 1596-7; *The Merchant of Venice*, 1596-7; *Henry IV*, Parts I and II, 1597-8; *Much Ado About Nothing*, 1598-9; *Henry V*, 1598-9; *Julius Caesar*, 1599-1600; *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1597-1601; *As You Like It*, 1599-1600; *Twelfth Night*, 1599-1602; *Hamlet*, 1600-1; *Troilus and Cressida*, 1601-2; *All's Well That Ends Well*, 1602-4; *Measure for Measure*, 1603-4; *Othello*, 1603-4; *King Lear*, 1605-6; *Macbeth*, 1605-6; *Timon of Athens*, 1605-8; *Antony and Cleopatra*, 1606-7; *Coriolanus*, 1607-8; *Pericles*, 1608-9; *Cymbeline*, 1609-10; *The Winter's Tale*, 1610-11; *The Tempest*, 1611-12; *Henry VIII*, 1612-13.

The dates given must be regarded as approximate.

Note

SELECTED DATES AND FACTS

- 1576 James Burbage built the Theatre in Shoreditch, a northern suburb of London. Richard Farrant converted part of the old Blackfriars priory into an indoor playhouse for the Children of the Chapel Royal.
- ?1577 The Curtain Theatre opened, also in Shoreditch.
- 1583 Players selected from the adult companies to form the Queen's Men.
- 1585 Admiral's Men established by this date, with Edward Alleyn among them.
- ?1587/8 Philip Henslowe built the Rose Theatre, on Bankside, a southern suburb of London, south of the Thames.
- 1588 Richard Tarleton, leading actor of the Queen's Men, died. Lord Strange's Men established by this date.
- 1590 Richard Burbage first mentioned as an actor. The children's companies suppressed.
- 1590-4 Lord Strange's Men and the Admiral's Men probably working in association or in combination.
- 1592 Shakespeare established as actor and playwright, working probably for Pembroke's and Sussex's Men. Henslowe began to make entries in his *Diary*. Robert Greene died.
- 1593 Plague closed the theatres for most of the year. Pembroke's Men broke up. Christopher Marlowe died.
- 1594 Queen's Men and Sussex's Men broke up, their stock passing to Admiral's and Strange's Men. These two companies separated after June, some members of Strange's re-forming as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, who were joined by Shakespeare. Thomas Kyd died.
- ?1596 The Swan Theatre built by Francis Langley on Bankside.
- 1597 Some players of Admiral's and Chamberlain's Men seceded to form a new group at the Swan, where their performance of Nashe's *Isle of Dogs* caused acting to be prohibited.
- 1598 The Admiral's Men, reinforced by the Swan group who returned to the Rose, and the Chamberlain's Men were the only companies licensed to act.
- 1599 The Globe Theatre built on Bankside; Shakespeare admitted to a share in its ownership.
- 1600 The Fortune Theatre built by Henslowe and Edward Alleyn in Finsbury, a northern suburb of London. The Children's companies begin playing again in indoor theatres.
- Scholarship:* the standard reference books are E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (1923), 4 vols., and *William Shakespeare: a Study of Facts and Problems* (1930), 2 vols. W. W. Greg edited *Henslowe's Diary* (1904-7) and *Henslowe Papers* (1908).

I

The Profession of Playwright

R. A. FOAKES



WHEN Shakespeare came to London between 1584 and 1592, he must often have heard the trumpets sound to announce a performance at a playhouse, and seen the crowds flock to it. Dukes and ambassadors, gentlemen and captains, citizens and apprentices, ruffians and harlots, 'Tailers, Tinkers, Cordwayners, Saylers, olde Men, yong Men, Women, Boyes, Girles, and such like' were likely to be among that audience, gathering to watch a spectacle that held something for each of them. Here was a splendid world of delight and instruction, offering poetry for the cultured, shows and a strong plot for the citizen, clowning and bawdy for the illiterate; and for everyone it brought to life, as no other medium then could, history, mythology, biblical story, and a whole range of earlier literature. Playwrights ransacked, as Stephen Gosson alleged, 'the Palace of Pleasure, the Golden Asse, the Æthiopian historie, Amadis of Fraunce, the Rounde Table, baudie Comedies in Latine, French, Italian

J. C. Adams' *The Globe Playhouse* (1943) contains much information, but many scholars believe that Adams was not sufficiently rigorous in selecting evidence and approached his subject with strong, unrecognized prejudices (see especially a review by G. F. Reynolds in *JEGP* for 1943). C. W. Hodges' *The Globe Restored* (1953) is balanced and well illustrated. A full study of theatrical conditions and traditions is G. Wickham's *Early English Stages*, of which the first of two volumes has appeared (1959). A short yet comprehensive book is A. M. Nagler, *Shakespeare's Stage* (1958).

Shakespeare's public is considered in A. Harbage, *Shakespeare's Audience* (1941) and *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (1952), and more general manifestations of taste in C. J. Sisson, *Le Goût Public et le Théâtre Élisabethain* (Dijon, 1922) and L. B. Wright, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England* (1935).

Specialized aspects of the theatrical scene are studied in H. N. Hillebrand, *The Child Actors* (1926) and R. B. Sharpe, *The Real War of the Theatres* (1935).

A. Nicoll has written a retrospective account of the study of Elizabethan theatres in *Shakespeare Survey* (1948).

and Spanish' to provide ever some new attraction. The Theatre was at once courtly and plebeian, aristocratic and popular, witty and vulgar, refined and ribald; it was a universal theatre, a meeting-place of all sorts of people, and a focus for all sorts of talent. It offered the writer a versatile stage, and actors who could sing, dance, tumble and fence as readily as they delivered their lines; and it gave scope to many kinds of writing. It challenged the popular compiler of chronicle plays to attempt poetic richness, and encouraged the sophisticated author, who knew his Terence and Plautus, to throw in a song or two, and some clowning, something for the crowd.

The stage was not only exciting in itself, but had a special prominence as the centre of a controversy between, on the one side, the church and civic governors of London, on the other side the court and aristocracy. If the actors seemed in their splendour to be kings indeed to the people, they were emissaries of the devil to puritan divines, who grew bitter as the churches emptied: 'Wyll not a fylthy playe, wyth the blast of a Trumpette sooner call thyther a thousande, than an houres tolling of a Bell bring to the Sermon a hundred?', complained a preacher at St. Paul's in 1578. Fulminations against the theatre as 'Satan's synagogue' or 'the nest of the Devil' did not affect its popularity, and the church tried what it could do to restrain play-acting; so the Bishop of London, advising Sir William Cecil to prohibit plays for a year in 1564, added dryly, 'and if it wer for ever, it wer nott amisse'. The church had the support of the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, who were continually seeking injunctions against 'common plaiers of interludes'. They complained that the actors drew large assemblies to view plays, and crowds were dangerous as tending to vice and disorder, and as liable to spread infection, especially in time of plague. Their pressure was successful to the extent that the public theatres were built in suburbs to the north of the city, or south of the River Thames on Bankside, in areas that were out of the jurisdiction of the city authorities.

Against these, the actors had powerful allies at Court, where Queen Elizabeth liked to see a play or two on festive occasions, especially at Christmas, when it was usual for one or more companies to be called to perform before her. Their chief protectors, however, were the lords whose name and livery they took to give them prestige and good standing in an age when players not 'belonging to any Baron of the Realme' were condemned in the statutes as rogues and vagabonds. The relationship between a company and their patron may not always have been very close, but he could intervene strongly on their behalf, as the

Lord Admiral and Lord Chamberlain did through Privy Council for their companies in 1598, causing a third company to be suppressed. What the actors gained by such patronage may be glimpsed in a letter written by James Burbage and five others to the Earl of Leicester in 1572, in which they ask him to

vouchsaſſe to reſteyne us at this preſent as your houſhold Seruaunts and daylie wayters, not that we meane to craue any further ſtipend or benefite at your Lordſhippes handes but our Lyveries as we have had, and alſo your honors Liſenſe to certifie that we are your houſehold Seruaunts when we ſhall have occaſion to travayle amongſt our frendes as we do uſuallye once a yere, and as other noble-mens Players do and have done in tyme paſt.

So in attacking or protecting the stage, the highest authorities were involved, Bishops, Mayors of London, the Queen and great lords who could exercise some control through Privy Council. The profession of acting or of writing plays had a special prominence because of this, and held its own risks. Plagues or disturbances might cause all playing to be prohibited, and force actors to travel far into the provinces; the city authorities might find some new means of harassing them, such as forcing them to contribute to the upkeep of the poor; but also the most benevolently inclined lords and the Queen herself were susceptible to the influence plays might have on the public, and were liable suddenly to become the stage's worst enemy if they suspected a play of engaging in political or religious matters. Actors and authors would then be disciplined, playing suppressed, and authors perhaps committed to prison, as, among others, Ben Jonson and John Marston were later to suffer imprisonment in this way. At the same time, to be an actor, author, or, as was not uncommon, both, was to engage in a profession capable of bringing glamour, prestige, popularity, and wealth. A letter-writer lamented in 1587, 'Yt is a wofull ſight to ſee two hundred proude players jett in their ſilkes, wheare five hundred pore people ſterve in the ſtreets'; but many must have found the players a fine sight. Shakespeare became one of them, wore the livery of several lords, and eventually took his place at the head of the list of actors granted four yards of red cloth for liveries to walk in the coronation proceſſion through London in 1604. He had reaſon to be proud.

During Shakespeare's early years, great developments were taking place in play-acting. There was a long tradition of playing by adult companies of men, performing in inn-yards, on scaffolds, or in halls and

✓ private houses; and an equally long tradition of acting by schoolboys, especially by the boys of the schools of St. Paul's Cathedral and the Chapel Royal. Before the 1570s there seem to have been performances on Sundays and holidays, perhaps without any settled regularity. Frequent regulations forbidding playing during time of divine service or the late afternoon show that plays were commonly staged on Sundays, chiefly in 'great Innes, havinge Chambers and secret places adjoyninge to their open stages and gallyries', as one order puts it. As early as 1545 a proclamation speaks of plays being 'commonly & besylve set foorth', and the city regulations extended in 1566 to forbidding Robert Fryer, a goldsmith, from staging plays for the public in his house before 4 on Sundays and festivals. The presentation of plays was evidently widespread, but, except for private performances in the houses of the great, or at Court, was confined to non-working days.

The first building constructed for dramatic performances was erected by James Burbage, an actor, in 1576; he called it, simply, The Theatre. It was a structure developed from the inn-yard or from the arenas long used to exhibit bear-baiting, with tiers of galleries extending round a central area and stage exposed to the open sky. In the same year, Richard Farrant, new master of the Children of the Chapel, leased a part of the old priory of Blackfriars, and converted it into an indoor theatre, where his boys proceeded to perform before the public. He seems to have done this to compete with the Children of Paul's, whose vicar choral, Sebastian Westcote, had been cited by the Court of Aldermen in the previous year because, as they said, he 'kepethe playes and resorte of the people to great gaine'; his boys perhaps acted in buildings of the school. A little later, about 1577, another public theatre was built, the Curtain.

✓ These events mark the beginning of a full-scale professionalism in the theatre. Its further development over the next twenty years falls into three phases, and Shakespeare emerges as a fledged actor-dramatist in the third phase. The first extended through the 1580s. During this period the standing of the adult players was enhanced when a group of actors was selected in 1583 to form a company under the Queen's patronage; this new company took prominence because of the talents of its leading players, especially Richard Tarleton, the great clown. The children's companies were active until 1584, when the Children of Paul's seem to have ceased playing for a time. The Children of the Chapel appeared occasionally after this date until 1592, and then vanished until 1600. In 1587, however, the Children of Paul's returned to playing for three years. It is doubtful if plays were as yet given on more than two or three

days a week, but performances certainly were offered on days other than holidays. Already in 1578 John Stockwood spoke with horror in a sermon of 'the gaine that is reaped of eighte ordinarie places in the Citie whiche I knowe, by playing but once a weeke (whereas many times they play twice and sometimes thrice) it amounteth to 2000 pounds by the yeare'; and in 1583 the licence for the Queen's Men permitted them to play at two inns, the Bull and the Bell, on holidays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Tarleton died in 1588, a jester much loved and much mourned; and this blow to the Queen's Men was followed by another when the company became involved in the Martin Marprelate controversy in 1589. The actors seem to have become too vehement in their attack on the puritans, who had begun the affair with a series of anonymous pamphlets purporting to be written by Martin and denouncing episcopacy. Playing was prohibited in November, because the actors had dealt with 'matters of Divinytie and of State unfitt to be suffred', as the Privy Council minute puts it. Thereafter the Queen's Men are traceable in the provinces, with only an occasional appearance in London; and in May 1594, Philip Henslowe noted in his *Diary* that the company 'broke & went into the contrey to playe'. The Children of Paul's were also involved in this controversy through the writings of their principal dramatist, John Lyly, and their acting was suppressed altogether in 1590.

There is not much evidence of the repertory of the Queen's Men during these years, but it included chronicle plays, classical romance, and pseudo-moralities like the two extant plays by Robert Wilson, an actor in the company; one important dramatist, Robert Greene, sold much of his work to them. It was probably a more popular repertory than that of the boys' companies, for their chief draw, Tarleton, was famous for his ability to play 'knave and foole'. The children, acting in indoor theatres, charging higher entrance fees, and drawing a narrower and more select audience, had thrown up no outstanding actors, but gave scope to the scholarly talents of university-trained writers like John Lyly, who produced witty comedies on classical themes. Lyly was writing by 1584, and may be referred to in Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse* (1579) as the author of 'two prose books played at the Belsavage, where you shall find never a word without wit, never a line without pith, never a letter placed in vain'; certainly this is an apt comment on those plays of his which remain. He was the major dramatist of the decade, and Shakespeare studied his work with great profit. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to draw too simple a contrast between the sophistication of the children's

companies, and the crude vigour of the adult players, between the expensive 'private' theatres and the cheaper 'public' playhouses.¹ The tastes of the audiences at these were not so different as to prevent authors like George Peele and Christopher Marlowe from writing for both; and, in addition, all the companies had enough in common to be welcome at Court to play before the most select audience in the realm, and to be able to entertain in the provinces audiences that were probably less sophisticated than any in London.

The decay of the Queen's Men and the suppression of the Children of Paul's coincided with the ascendancy of other adult companies, marking a second phase in the growth of a full-scale professional theatre. Two of these companies were to emerge quickly as outstanding. First were the Lord Admiral's Men, who played under the patronage of the Lord High Admiral, Lord Howard; they appeared as a group in 1585, and Edward Alleyn, who was then a member and had acted earlier, acquired a major share in the control of the company in 1589. Alleyn seems to have been one of the great actors of the English stage, a man praised by Thomas Nashe in 1592 as the finest ever: 'Not *Roscius* nor *Æsopæ*, those admyred tragedians that have lived ever since before Christ was borne, could ever performe more in action than famous *Ned Allen*.' The second company was the group known as Lord Strange's Men, who played under the patronage of Ferdinando Stanley, later Earl of Derby. Their early history is obscure, but possibly by 1588, certainly from 1590 to 1594, they were working in liaison with the Admiral's Men, at times as one combined company. In 1594, after the death of Lord Derby, the companies separated, many of the former Strange's Men taking the patronage of the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Hunsdon. Richard Burbage, a slightly younger man than Alleyn, was their leading player: he may have acted in the 1580s, but first comes to notice in 1590, when he was probably

¹ Such a contrast is often drawn, most fully in A. Harbage's *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions* (1952). He argues that there were 'two distinct theatrical traditions in England, signalized by two distinct kinds of theatre', the public and private theatres; these, he claims, had different repertoires, at the public theatres, 'romantic, idealistic, positive, and often patriotic and religious' plays being in vogue, while at the private theatres satirical comedy prevailed. Most of his evidence relates to the period after 1600, when the children began to play again, and though he once acknowledges that there was 'probably' no private theatre operating between 1590 and 1599, he ignores this in his general argument. The lists of 'the known repertoires of all companies until 1613' given in an appendix should not be relied on; they do not include, for instance, the lost plays recorded by Henslowe. G. Wickham's *Early English Stages, I, 1300-1576* (1959) helps to put Harbage's account into a fuller historical perspective.

with the Admiral's Men. It would be pleasant to think that he learned his craft from Alleyn, whose standing as the leading actor of the age he inherited in the first decades of the seventeenth century, after Alleyn, still not forty years old, retired finally from the stage about 1605.

These two companies seem to have had the main use of the true theatres, as distinct from inn-yards and the like, available in London. James Burbage (father of Richard), a poor actor in the early 1570s, married a wealthy woman and used her money to build the first theatre. After 1585, the Curtain, operated by a Henry Laneman, was used as an 'easer' to the Theatre by an agreement between the proprietors who pooled and equally divided the profits. By 1586, possibly much earlier, a theatre at Newington Butts was in use. Then in 1587, Philip Henslowe, who seems, like Burbage, to have acquired money by marriage, contracted with a grocer, John Cholmley, to build what was to become the Rose Theatre. This was erected by 1588, and by 1592 had passed into the sole ownership of Henslowe. As James Burbage saw his son become a leading actor and sharer in the Chamberlain's Men before he died in 1597, so Philip Henslowe saw his stepdaughter, Joan Woodward, marry Edward Alleyn in 1592, and from that time on Alleyn became a son to him. The close relationship between the leading actor and sharer in the company's stock and the theatre owner may have been a stabilizing factor in the history of these two companies. During their period of association, the Strange's and Admiral's Men played at the Curtain, the Rose, and, for a brief period in June 1594, at Newington Butts, which by then may have come into Henslowe's control.

Other companies were active during these years. The Earl of Pembroke's Men, who were ruined by the great plague of 1593 which stopped all playing in London between February and December, the Earl of Sussex's Men, who seem to have broken up in 1594, and the Queen's Men, before their removal to the provinces, all had some connection with the activities of the Admiral's and Strange's Men. Plays belonging to Pembroke's Men seem to have passed to Sussex's Men, who acted briefly with the Queen's Men in April 1594 before both companies broke up. Some of their plays came into the repertory of the newly formed Chamberlain's Men in 1594, among them *Titus Andronicus*, *The Taming of a Shrew* and a version of *Hamlet*, while others were taken over by the Admiral's Men, like *The Jew of Malta*, and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. From this year, 1594, which marks the end of the second phase of development, the Admiral's and Chamberlain's Men dominated the London stage, at any rate until the turn of the century.

Of these two companies, the Admiral's Men had a longer continuity and fame at this time, largely through Edward Alleyn, but also, perhaps, because most of the plays of the best writers of 1587-92 were written for them, or passed into their repertory—plays by Marlowe, Kyd, Peele, Lodge and Greene. Marlowe wrote one play for the Children of the Chapel, and so did George Peele, but the rest of their work was sold to adult companies, usually to the Admiral's Men; Greene wrote mainly for the Queen's Men, but his plays came into the repertory of Strange's Men or the Admiral's Men by about 1592. The new writing talent of the so-called 'University Wits' was thus chiefly deployed for the adult companies that rose in the decay of the Queen's Men and the Children's companies. These men, who, except for Thomas Kyd, were graduates, wrote for the stage perhaps partly because they lacked patronage, or could not scrape a living by poetry, but also because the emergent companies of the late 1580s were competing for plays. Robert Greene seems to describe how he came to write plays in his pamphlet *Francesco's Fortunes* (1590), where, in the person of Francesco, he tells how he 'fell in amongst a company of players, who persuaded him to try his wit in writing', and so he wrote a comedy, 'which so generally pleased the audience that happy were those actors in short time, that could get any of his works'. These 'sweet Gentlemen', who, in the words of Thomas Nashe writing in 1589, 'vaunted their pens in private devices, and tricked up a company of taffata fooles with their feathers', brought to their craft a new poetic energy and command of language, a new maturity of design and power of thought, and a new insight into character. They brought also an academic training to their work, which is as sophisticated in its kind as Lyly's is in his own vein. Their plays, especially those of Marlowe, are the earliest English plays which are still widely read and occasionally revived on the stage.

The plays of these writers had their greatest theatrical success while Edward Alleyn, who played Orlando in Greene's *Orlando Furioso*, Tamburlaine, Doctor Faustus, and Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*, was at the height of his powers. Well before Alleyn retired from the stage for some years in 1597, Greene (1592), Marlowe (1593), Kyd (1594) and Peele (1596) were all dead. It was during their great burst of creative activity that Shakespeare appeared as an actor and playwright. The first certain allusions to him and his writings are found in pamphlets of 1592. In that year Thomas Nashe referred in his *Pierce Penniless* to the character of Talbot in *Henry VI*; Robert Greene misquoted a line from 3 *Henry VI* in his *Greene's Groat's-Worth of Wit*, and complained of Shakespeare as

an 'upstart Crow', a man who had pilfered the writings of others, or who had presumed equality with established authors, or who was a mere actor pretending that he could 'bombast out a blanke verse' as well as university-educated poets—several interpretations of Greene's doubtful words are possible; and finally, Henry Chettle defended Shakespeare as 'excellent in the quality he professes'. Such testimony from his contemporaries establishes that he had 'arrived' by this time.

In the same year, 1592, Philip Henslowe began to record his share of the daily takings at his theatres, and to list the plays performed, in his account-book, better known as his *Diary*, which is now in the library of Dulwich College. Among the plays he noted as performed by Strange's Men early in 1592 were a *Henry VI*, probably new on 3 March 1592, 'tittus and vespacia', and *The Jealous Comedy*, probably new on 5 January 1593. The Earl of Sussex's Men, acting at the end of 1593, performed a *Buckingham* and 'titus & ondronicus'; and the Admiral's and Chamberlain's Men, acting together briefly in June 1594, are recorded as staging 'andronicus', *Hamlet*, and *The Taming of a Shrew*. In 1594 also, a quarto of *Titus Andronicus* was published, its title-page reading, 'As it was Plaide by the Right Honourable the Earle of Darbie, Earle of Pembroke, and Earl of Sussex their Servants'. In the same year a quarto of *The Taming of a Shrew* as played by Pembroke's Men appeared, and in 1597 *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, a play now thought to be a bad version of 3 *Henry VI*, was ascribed to the same company. The relationship of *Titus and Vespasia* to *Titus Andronicus* is not known, and that between *The Taming of a Shrew* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, though close, remains indeterminate; *The Jealous Comedy* may have no connection with *The Comedy of Errors*, and *Buckingham* may be nothing to do with *Richard III*; but there is left enough evidence to show that Shakespeare was at work at the very latest by the beginning of 1592, and probably for some time before that. It also seems likely that his progress to the Chamberlain's Men was via Pembroke's and Sussex's Men. Through a connection, perhaps as actor and writer, with these companies he would have come into association with Strange's Men, who were acting a part of *Henry VI* in 1592, and with the Admiral's Men. Then, when Strange's and Admiral's separated after playing as a combined group in June 1594, he joined the new company that succeeded Strange's Men and took the patronage of the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Hunsdon.

So Shakespeare, coming to London as the old style of adult playing by the Queen's Men, referred to as 'Vetus Comœdia' already in 1589, was in decay, and as the boys, after achieving their finest work in acting

Lyly's plays, were suppressed, attached himself to a company that soon brought him into connection with the prominent Strange's and Admiral's Men. These, financed by the only builders who had established their own theatres in close connection with a company, and possessing the leading actors in Alleyn and Burbage, were the inheritors of the achievement of the adult and boys' companies of the 1580s; and after 1594, their wealth and their talent stabilized in family relationships, they came to have something of a monopoly. Shakespeare came to maturity in the third phase of development from the building of the Theatre in 1576, the post-Marlovian phase, after emerging in 1594 to work with the up-and-coming Richard Burbage in the Chamberlain's Men.

During the next six years the Admiral's and Chamberlain's Men had little serious competition to face; no Children's companies or 'private' theatres were operating, and not much is heard of other adult companies. A new theatre, the Swan, was built in about 1596 on Bankside by Francis Langley, who drew a number of the Admiral's Men, and a few actors probably from the Chamberlain's Men, to play there as the Earl of Pembroke's Men in 1597. But the venture was short-lived, for the Privy Council prohibited all playing after a performance at the Swan of a lost play by Nashe, *The Isle of Dogs*, in July 1597; it was apparently a play 'contanyng very seditious and sclanderous matter'. Langley's company promptly returned to the Rose to play in Henslowe's theatre, and were absorbed into the Admiral's Men again. Henslowe quickly obtained a licence to start playing again, but Langley did not, and an order of Privy Council in February 1598 calling for the suppression of a third company may show that he staged plays for a time without permission. This order of the Privy Council shows that the Admiral's Men and the Chamberlain's Men were the only companies licensed to perform plays at this time. Their predominance is reflected in the way they took turns in appearances at Court in connection with the Queen's Christmas festivities until 1600, when an Earl of Derby's company also played there. It is reflected also in the prosperity which brought to each company a new theatre. Cuthbert Burbage, the elder son of James, took over, on the death of his father in 1597, a troublesome dispute with the owner of the ground on which the Theatre was built, and solved it by taking down the building, transporting it from Shoreditch piece by piece across the river, and setting it up again on Bankside, presumably with much renovation. This new, or renewed, theatre was called the Globe, and its appearance near the Rose, which was also south of the river, caused Henslowe and Alleyn to plan a new stage for their company. In 1600 they opened the

splendid new Fortune theatre in Finsbury; they had moved across the river in the opposite direction to the Chamberlain's Men, instructing their builder to copy the Globe in many details, and clearly setting out to match their rivals.

The two main companies competed not only in their theatres, but also in their repertories. They each inherited part of the stock of the old Sussex's, Pembroke's and Queen's Men, and until 1594 they played the same kinds of play, as Henslowe's records confirm. It is probable that they continued to do so, though not much is known about the repertory of the Chamberlain's Men apart from Shakespeare's plays, whereas Henslowe's lists provide a great deal of information about that of the Admiral's Men. However, Shakespeare's plays reveal some evidence of competition. At first he seems to have built on the work of his contemporaries and predecessors, trying his hand at chronicle-history, at Senecan tragedy, and at various forms of comedy, and imitating now Marlowe, now Lyly or Greene. After 1594, when his status as a leading member of his company is confirmed by his acting, together with Richard Burbage, and the famous clown William Kemp, as payee for Court performances, he continued to write several different kinds of play, sometimes in response to successes at the Rose. His creation of Shylock may have been provoked by a revival of *The Jew of Malta* by the Admiral's in 1595-6. They had a play on the theme of *Julius Caesar*, a *Henry V*, and a *Troilus and Cressida* before Shakespeare wrote his; and they replied to his *Henry IV*, or rather to his portrait of Falstaff, with their *Sir John Oldcastle*. The rivalry of the companies extended even to personal oppositions, as revealed by Henslowe's records of loans to discharge Thomas Dekker from arrest by the Chamberlain's Men in 1599, and to enable William Bird to pursue a lawsuit against Thomas Pope, a member of Shakespeare's company.

The affairs of the two companies may have differed a good deal in detail, and after the building of the Globe, they had a different organization. But before 1599 both companies consisted of a number of sharers, who each owned a share in the joint stock of plays, properties, costumes, and the like; they employed other actors, possibly some with a high standing as master actors, some hired men, some boys. They worked in a theatre owned by a financier, James Burbage or Philip Henslowe, who took half of the receipts in the galleries at each performance as his perquisite. Relations between owner and company were doubtless close, and Henslowe came to act as banker, moneylender, and general helper to the Admiral's Men. However, this company lost its family link with

the owner when Alleyn retired from the stage in 1597. Although he returned to it from 1600 to about 1605, he devoted himself more and more to his properties, taking a large share with Henslowe in ownership; they built the Fortune as partners. The Chamberlain's Men kept and strengthened the link between owner and players. Richard Burbage, who continued to act until his death in 1619, and his brother Cuthbert, the inheritor of the Theatre, made a new arrangement with the company when they built the Globe. They kept only a half share in the lease and profits of the playhouse for themselves, and admitted five leading players, one of them Shakespeare, to equal shares in the other half. So a body of the sharers of the acting company obtained an interest in the ownership of the theatre itself; and this no doubt contributed to the strength of Shakespeare's company during the later part of his career.

Nevertheless, Henslowe's accounts contain much that is relevant to a consideration of Shakespeare as an actor and dramatist. Most plays of this period are lost; many were never printed, or were printed anonymously, and few authors seem to have troubled about the publication of the plays they wrote after they had sold them to a company. Ben Jonson was the first to gather his works together and oversee their printing in 1616; Shakespeare's plays had to wait for some of his fellows to bring them out seven years after his death. It is doubtful whether all printed texts survive, and certainly most manuscripts do not; they remained in the company stock until destroyed by time or the decay of the theatres, or, often, by some accident, such as the fire which burnt down the Fortune in 1621, reducing to ashes playbooks and costumes. There would be little evidence even of the titles of missing plays if Henslowe's *Diary* had not survived, to show how men wrote for the Admiral's company, singly or in collaboration, to show what they wrote (the *Diary* indicates that Michael Drayton was the author of *Sir John Oldcastle*, printed anonymously in 1599, and had a hand in 23 other plays now lost), and to offer the only proof that some men wrote at all (Charles Massey is an example). It is useful to cite the *Diary* here because the early association and later rivalry of the Admiral's Men and Chamberlain's Men make it probable that their repertory systems of presentation and their methods of obtaining plays were roughly similar.²

² W. W. Greg branded Henslowe as 'an illiterate moneyed man . . . who regarded art as a subject for exploitation' (*Henslowe's Diary*, ii. 112-13); and E. K. Chambers modified this view only slightly, calling Henslowe a 'capitalist' as if this marked him and his company off as inferior to the Chamberlain's Men. Greg went on to argue that 'the financial arrangements which we find obtaining in the

Henslowe's lists show that the Admiral's Men played a daily repertory, probably excepting Sundays, and with longer breaks during Lent, when acting was forbidden, and in summer, during the long vacation, when the company sometimes travelled in the country. Performances were in the afternoon, and there was normally a change of play every day. Even a very successful play, like George Chapman's *Humorous Day's Mirth* (*Comedy of Humours*), first acted in May 1597, was not performed more than twice in one week. No play received more than thirty-two performances in all, and twelve to fifteen indicate a respectable success. This meant a huge turnover of plays: between June and December 1594, fifteen new plays entered the repertory, and another fifteen during the following year. Not many of these remained in the repertory for as much as a year, though some were revived after a lapse of time. A dramatist sold his work outright to the company for comparatively little, £5 being a typical figure in the 1590s, and the company seems to have withheld plays from publication, as more of an asset unprinted, at least until their first run was over, and often for a much longer period. In such conditions, playwrights multiplied, and collaboration was common. Among the authors who wrote for Henslowe at this time were Chapman, Dekker, Henry Chettle, John Day, Samuel Rowley, Michael Drayton, Thomas Heywood, Henry Porter and Ben Jonson. Some, like Rowley, Jonson and Heywood, were also actors; and some other actors in the company, like Charles Massey and John Singer, wrote an occasional piece for the stage. Many seem to have written loyally for the Admiral's Men, but Ben Jonson changed allegiances several times, Chapman went over to writing for the Children's companies when these were revived

groups of companies under Henslowe's control were the exception rather than the rule' (p. 113). There is no evidence for this claim, prior to 1598-9 when the Burbages admitted actors to a share in the Globe; and James Burbage may have been as illiterate as Henslowe who could read, write and keep accounts, even if he spelt words oddly. Also, Burbage was as much a capitalist as Henslowe, or, for that matter, Shakespeare. Greg influenced R. B. Sharpe, who attempted in his *The Real War of the Theatres* to show that Henslowe's company made a 'proletarian appeal' to a lower-class audience, whereas the Chamberlain's Men played to a superior, fashionable audience, and that their plays were correspondingly different. His argument is unwarranted, for it is based on a comparison of repertories, and while that of the Admiral's Men is fully documented in Henslowe's *Diary*, we know little of the Chamberlain's Men's plays apart from the few, principally Shakespeare's, which have been preserved. See also T. W. Baldwin, *The Organization and Personnel of the Shakespearean Company* (1927), pp. 1-45, and *Henslowe's Diary*, edited by R. A. Foakes and R. T. Rickert (1961), pp. xxv-xxxiii.

after 1600, and it seems that authors were free to sell to whom they pleased. At the same time, it was natural for actors like Samuel Rowley or Shakespeare, who had a stake in one company, to write mainly for their own group.

The repertory of the Admiral's Men shows an enormous variety of plays, on British history, real and mythical, on recent French history, comedies set in Greece, France and Italy, plays on biblical themes, the new comedies of 'humours' of Chapman and Jonson, romantic comedies like Dekker's *Shoemakers Holiday*, a 'pastoral tragedy', and tragedies on themes ranging from *Agamemnon* to *Cox of Cullompton*. It also included a fair number of plays, presumably comedies, with titles like *Crack me this Nut*, *The Fountain of New Fashions*, *Christmas Comes but Once a Year*, *What Will Be Shall Be*, and *As Merry as May Be*, some of which are reminiscent of Shakespearian titles, *Twelfth Night* or *What You Will*, *As You Like It*, *Much Ado about Nothing*. The range is remarkable, and reflects another feature common to this company and the Chamberlain's Men, that they were able to perform all kinds of plays, and entertain all kinds of audiences; it also points to the mixed character of the audience at the public theatres in the 1590s. Both companies might be called on to play in private at the house of some lord; for instance, Henslowe recorded a payment in March 1598 to 'the carman for caryinge and bryngyn of the stufe back agayne when they playd in fleatstreat pryvat', and the Chamberlain's Men acted *Henry IV* before the Flemish ambassador in private in 1600; perhaps on each occasion they had already acted on the public stage before an audience ranging from gallant to groundling during the afternoon of the day concerned. Both companies were accustomed to acting at Court, and both knew what it was to travel in the country, and amble, as Dekker put it, writing of Ben Jonson, 'in leather pilch by a play-wagon, in the high-way'.

Wherever they performed, much of the attraction of the actors and their plays no doubt lay in their flamboyance, in the richness and splendour of fine costumes, hangings, and stages that were already in 1592, according to Thomas Nashe, 'stately furnisht'. There is plenty of evidence for the splendid appearance of the players and stage in Elizabethan theatres, which have so often been regarded as 'bare'.³ Henslowe

³ Some popular handbooks on Shakespeare keep alive the notion of a 'bare platform' within 'the bare framework of the theatre', where 'the absence of stage-scenery meant that Shakespeare had to create it in the verse he wrote', so that even a backcloth now looks 'garish and absurd' against the splendour of the verse (J. D. Wilson, *The Essential Shakespeare* (1932), pp. 31-2). The evidence for the visual richness of the Elizabethan theatres has in fact long been available, and

noted frequent expenses for very elaborate costumes for plays, and among other documents left by him and Edward Alleyn are lists of properties and costumes in the stock of the Admiral's Men in 1598. The items include a hell-mouth, two steeples, Phaeton's chariot, a tree of golden apples, various tombs, an altar, a canopy, two mossy banks, a dragon, a lion, a great horse, a frame for beheading, and the cauldron used in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*. The lists also mention the city of Rome and the cloth of the sun and moon, perhaps both painted cloths for hanging at the rear of the stage. The theatres themselves presented an attractive appearance. The stage façade was richly ornamented ('painted' was the word used by Gabriel Harvey and Edmund Spenser), with its gallery or balcony over the stage, doors on either side, and canopy supported on two columns over part of the great platform area extending into the middle of the arena, where the groundlings stood to watch and listen. The columns supporting the canopy were marbled, or perhaps gold at some theatres, if we may trust the testimony of Thomas Heywood in his translation of Ovid's *Art of Love* (? 1600), who speaks of

The golden ensignes yonder spreading fare,
Which wafts them to the gorgeous Theater:
See what thin leaves of gold foile guild the wood,
Making the columns seeme all massie good.

The canopy itself was painted on the underside like a sky, 'nail'd up with many a star' as Thomas Middleton said, a 'heaven' to match the 'hell' under the stage. The mainposts of the framework supporting the three tiers of galleries surrounding the stage area, and the columns bearing the canopy, were, at the Fortune Theatre, adorned with figures of satyrs. The stage itself was hung with an arras or painted cloth; so Ben Jonson testifies in his Children's play for court-presentation, *Cynthia's Revels* (1600), in which a boy walks on the stage in the Induction pretending to be a gentleman come to watch the play, and speaks with other children acting as stage-hands,

Slid, the boy takes me for a piece of *perspective* (I hold my life) or some silk cortaine come to hang the stage here! sir cracke, I am none of your fresh pictures, that use to beautifie the decaied dead arras at a publike theatre.

is well emphasized in W. M. Merchant, *Shakespeare and the Artist* (1959), Chapter 1, and in A. M. Nagler, *Shakespeare's Stage*, pp. 32-7; see also *Shakespeare Survey* (1959), especially the articles by C. W. Hodges, 'The Lantern of Taste', pp. 8-14, and R. Southern, 'On Reconstructing a Practicable Elizabethan Public Playhouse', pp. 22-34.

In addition to elaborate properties, painted cloths, splendid costumes, and a richly decorated stage façade, it is known that special hangings were used to mark, for instance, a tragedy, as in the Induction to *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599), a play belonging to the Chamberlain's Men, History says

The stage is hung with blacke: and I perceive
The Auditors prepare for *Tragedie*.

It would be surprising, then, if part of the attraction of the theatre was not its spectacle; the stage itself must have seemed magnificent to the groundlings, but the plays too might provide much visual splendour. So in *The Trumpet of War* (1598), Stephen Gosson describes how 'in publike Theaters, when any notable shew passeth over the stage, the people arise up out of their seates, & stand upright with delight and eagernes to view it well'. The plays of the public theatres have numerous shows and processions, often quite elaborate, like the following, from the successful *Old Fortunatus* by Dekker, played by the Admiral's Men before the Queen, probably over Christmas 1598-9; *Fortunatus* lies under a tree, and there enter

a *Carter*, a *Sailor*, a *Monke*, a *Shepherd* all crown'd, a *Nymph* with a *Globe*, another with *Fortunes* wheele, then *Fortune*: After her fowre *Kings* with broken Crownes and Scepters, chained in silver Gyves and led by her. The foremost come out singing. *Fortune* takes her *Chaire*, the *Kings* lying at her feete, shee treading on them as shee goes up.

Such a lavish show was not to be seen in all plays, but most have processions, council-scenes, battle-scenes, duels, a play within the play (like *The Spanish Tragedy* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), a trial, a dance or masque, or a display of some kind.

The large, open stage projecting into the arena was suitable for such shows, and in addition to this area, the dramatist had a balcony, at least two doors, a central curtain, tent or alcove, the exact nature of which is not yet certainly established, and the two pillars supporting the canopy to use if he wished. The 'hell' under the stage could also be employed to good effect with the aid of trapdoors, as in *Hamlet*, where the Ghost speaks from under the stage. But for all its splendour, its possibilities of spectacle and of effects like fireworks, or descents from the 'heavens' (Henslowe installed a throne there in 1595), the stage was basically a simple one, with a permanent, largely neutral, background, the interior

façade of the theatre itself. There was no proscenium arch to the stage, and the greater part of the acting-space could not be curtained off; so one scene followed another with no break in performances that took place in open daylight. The main visual effects were embodied in the appearance and movements of actors or managed by portable properties; further dimensions of visual splendour might be suggested by a poet's verse, which, as Shakespeare supposes in the prologue to *Henry V*, could piece out the imperfections of the stage, and tempt an audience to think their 'wooden O' transformed into 'the vasty fields of France'. In general, plays were sufficiently independent of scenery and machinery to be staged readily elsewhere than in the theatre, as at Court, or within a private house.

The characteristics of their theatres helped to make possible the adaptability and the wide range of repertory of the Admiral's and Chamberlain's Men. Their daily repertory must have given the actors hard work, and their labour was not always rewarded; a play might prove unpopular and be hissed off the stage, and on occasion Henslowe's gallery receipts dropped to a few shillings. The players also had to adjust themselves to the developments in the theatre and the drama in the 1580s and 1590s, to a continual refining and experimentation, to subtler conceptions of character, freer verse rhythms, new modes of play, like the 'humour' comedies that Jonson and Chapman made fashionable in 1597-8. As part of this adjustment, they developed new styles of acting. At the end of the 1590s the style of the period of Kyd and Marlowe was being parodied, by Jonson in *Poetaster*, by Shakespeare in the person of Pistol, by Marston in his *Antonio's Revenge*. Hieronimo and Tamburlaine became symbols of rant, as in *Histrionomastix* (?1598-9), where some soldiers who have seized a group of players address them with the words,

Sirha, is this you would rend and teare the Cat
Upon a Stage, and now march like a drownd rat?
Looke up and play the *Tamburlaine*.

Indeed, in Thomas Middleton's *Black Book*, a pamphlet published in 1604, a 'villanous lieutenant' is described as having a 'head of haire like one of my devils in *Doctor Faustus*, when the old theatre cracked and frightened the audience'. *Doctor Faustus*, like Shakespeare's *Richard III*, remained a popular play, but the new theatres built in the late 1590s, the Globe and Fortune, mark the success of a new drama, and, no doubt, of a new and more refined style of acting than that of Tarleton, or the ranting manner required of Alleyn for parts like Tamburlaine and

Orlando. The distance between the styles of 1590 and of 1600 or so may be gauged by the contrast between the texture of the players' speeches delivered at the court of Elsinore, and the texture of *Hamlet* itself; for here Shakespeare deliberately recalled a manner he had long outgrown, and used it as a dramatic device to mark off the play within the play.

The external evidence as to how the actors played their parts is not very trustworthy, since much of it is found in the writings of prejudiced men attacking or defending the stage; it is also difficult to interpret, since the same vocabulary was used of oratory and of acting. However, the puritans constantly complained that the actors were too lifelike, with their 'effeminate gestures, to ravish the sence; and wanton speache, to whet desire to inordinate lust', as Stephen Gosson phrased it in 1579. One of their usual epithets to describe acting was 'lively', in the sense displayed in a passage from J. Rainoldes, *The overthrow of Stage-Playes* (1600), where he speaks of 'the actors, in whom the earnest care of lively representing the lewd demeanour of bad persons doeth worke a great impression of waxing like unto them'. The defenders of the stage also tended to emphasize this ability of the actors to represent people, to 'appeare to you to be the selfe same men' they impersonated, to cite a commendatory poem in Thomas Heywood's *Apology for Actors* (1612). This does not mean that acting was naturalistic, only that the best acting always then seemed true to life.⁴ The frequent gibes at country-players, or at rant and

⁴ There has been much controversy about the nature of Elizabethan acting. B. L. Joseph argued in his *Elizabethan Acting* (1951) that an actor's gestures and delivery were formalized on the pattern of those practised by an orator, and set forth in manuals of speaking. He was anticipated in this view by Harbage, 'Elizabethan Acting', *PMLA* (1939), 685-708, and has restated it in 'The Elizabethan Stage and the Art of Elizabethan Drama', *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* (1955), 145-60. Several writers have attacked his conclusions, taking evidence from Elizabethan comments on the stage, or from plays themselves, and have claimed that acting was naturalistic, or that actors tried to be lifelike, or, alternatively, that there was a mixture of formal and naturalistic acting. The whole question turns on what the Elizabethans thought was natural, and this we cannot know for certain. See in this connection S. L. Bethell, 'Shakespeare's Actors', *Review of English Studies* (1950), 193-205; J. R. Brown, 'On the Acting of Shakespeare's Plays', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (1953), 477-84; R. A. Foakes, 'The Player's Passion', *Essays and Studies* (1954), 62-77; and M. Rosenberg, 'Elizabethan Actors: Men or Marionettes?', *PMLA* (1954), 915-27. One question that receives scant attention by most of the writers on acting is the degree of change that took place between 1580 and 1642, when the theatres were closed; I think that there was rapid change before 1600 from stylization towards a greater truth to life and subtlety of presentation.

'forced passion', together with the parody of Kyd's manner, suggest that by the end of the 1590s the notion of truth to life had changed; certainly the dramatist could make greater demands of his actors, as Shakespeare developed, for instance, the women's roles played by boys to the scale of Portia, Gertrude and Beatrice, and enlarged the traditional ranting part of the tragic hero to embrace the alternate brooding and passionate activity, the humour and irony of Hamlet.

However successful the actors were in keeping pace with dramatic developments, they could not expect to please their severer critics among the audience. The most substantial and judicious part of them probably sat in the galleries, which would account for a writer in 1600 comparing himself to 'a Player that in speaking an Epilogue makes love to the two-pennie-roume for a *plaudit*'. There might be sitting not only gentlemen and citizens, but also the author of the play, or perhaps a group of poets. In his third satire in *Virgidemiarum* (1598), Joseph Hall remarks how in a theatre

our Poets in high Parliament
Sit watching every word, and gesticment,
Like curious Censors of some doughtie geare,
Whispering their verdict in their fellowes eare.

Ben Jonson is specifically attacked by Dekker in *Satiromastix* (1602) for behaving in this way, and Horace, the character representing him, is told, 'you shall not sit in a Gallery, when your comedies and Enterludes have entred their Actions, and there make vile and bad faces at everie lyne, to make Gentlemen have an eye to you, and to make Players afraide to take your part'. No doubt authors were often glad to take their share of applause, as John Day indicates in his *Isle of Gulls* (1606), where one character asks, 'Doe Poets use to bespeake their Auditory', and is answered by another, 'The best in grace doe, and but for that some that I know had never had their grace in Poetry till this day'; but they did not spare the actors.

Perhaps an actor-playwright like Shakespeare was less likely to sit in judgment than the scholarly Ben Jonson, but even he put some authorial advice to actors into the mouth of Hamlet. Thomas Dekker, writing in 1607 of the Fortune Theatre, said that he had not listened to his plays being acted ('mine eare stood not within the reach of their Larums'), but this did not prevent him from making a very sharp complaint about the players,

that in such Consorts, many of the Instruments are for the most part out of tune, And no marvaile; for let the Poet set the note of his Nombers, even to Apolloes owne lyre, the Player will have his owne Crochets, and sing false notes, in dispite of all the rules of Musick.

Such an attitude on the part of a working dramatist is not surprising if his heritage is borne in mind; for the influence of the university-trained men, Greene, Marlowe and others, who had set up new poetic and intellectual standards for public theatre plays at the end of the 1580s, continued to be felt. It was they who developed the main medium of the later drama, blank verse, into an admirable form for Shakespeare to perfect, and the steady continuance of verse plays throughout this period shows more than that the audience was used to listening, as to sermons, and could relish spoken styles in a way that it is hard for us to recapture fully; it illustrates also that the authors, and many among the audiences, had a concern for literary values. This may be reflected in the common term for playwright, the word used by Dekker, for instance, which was, simply, poet.

If Dekker, a popular dramatist and steady writer for the Admiral's Men, could chide actors strongly, as in the passage cited above, it is hardly remarkable that others are critical. The most extreme form of this criticism is found in the universities, which had their own long tradition of occasional productions of satirical or scholarly plays, mostly written in Latin. The antagonism of the scholar-poet and the actor is illustrated in the trio of plays, *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, and the two parts of *The Return from Parnassus*, acted in Cambridge between 1598 and 1602. In the first of these a clown is drawn on by a rope, in a caustic accusation that the public theatres dragged a clown into every play; and in the third, Burbage and Kemp of the Chamberlain's Men are impersonated as illiterate, and as practising the 'basest trade'. The comment of the character Philomusus here on actors, as

those leaden spouts,
That nought doe vent but what they do receive,

echoes the frequent remarks of a similar tone made by Greene and Nashe especially among the 'University Wits' ten years previously. In one of his kinder moments, Greene said of an actor, 'what sentence thou utterest on the stage, flowes from the censure of our wittes, and what sentence or conceipte of the invention the people applaud for excellent, that comes

from the secrets of our knowledge. I graunt your action, though it be a kind of mechanical labour.'

This attitude stemmed not merely from a natural tension between an author conscious of his play as poetry, and actors for whom any one play was part of a changing repertory; it arose in large part from the scholar's sense of getting a poor reward for his labour, receiving merely a few pounds for a play. This grievance is also voiced in *2 Return from Parnassus*, where *Studioso* says,

Better it is mongst fidlers to be chiefe,
Then at a plaiers trencher beg reliefe.
But ist not strange these mimick apes should prize
Unhappy Schollers at a hireling rate?
Vile world, that lifts them up to hye degree,
And treads us downe in groveling misery.
England affordes those glorious vagabonds,
That carried earst their fardels on their backes,
Coursers to ride on through the gazing streetes,
Sooping [sweeping] it in their glaring Satten sute,
And pages to attend their maisterships:
With mouthing words that better wits have framed
They purchase lands, and now Esquiers are namde.

However much they might abuse the actors, university men continued to write for the public stages. Among the regular writers for the Admiral's Men in the late 1590s were at least two graduates, John Day and Thomas Heywood, besides the learned Ben Jonson, who worked with them for a time, and George Chapman. Indeed, writers could not afford to be too hostile to the stage, since, as Francis Meres says in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598), poets lacked patronage, and were 'soly or chiefly maintained, countenanced and patronized' by 'our witty Comedians and stately Tragedians (the glorious and goodlie representers of all fine witte, glorified phrase and queint action)', that is to say, the actors.

The poet who turned to the theatre in order to earn money had to be prolific in his output of plays if he wished to make any sort of a living out of his writing, and the scholar's complaint of poverty helps to put into focus the advantages of working as a dramatist from within the company. A number of men were actor-dramatists, and several of the sharers in the Admiral's Men wrote plays, among them for a time Ben Jonson; but most of them wrote occasionally, and must have drawn their main income from their share in the theatre profits, or their pay as

actors. Jonson, for instance, seems to have had a hand in six or seven plays between 1597 and 1600, and Sam Rowley, another sharer in the Admiral's Men, probably wrote or contributed to no more than eight or ten plays during a career lasting well into the seventeenth century. By contrast, Henry Chettle, a writer making a living out of his plays, wrote two and collaborated in fourteen during the single year 1598; in the same year Dekker also had a hand in at least sixteen plays. Until 1598 or so, Shakespeare was in the position of an actor-sharer, who could take time over his plays, and his output, though large by modern standards, was slender in comparison with Dekker's. After 1598, when he took a share in the new Globe, his position was still more privileged; an interest in the property and in the acting company was enough to give him a good income, and he had a unique position as a dramatist. He had the best conditions for writing, possessing an intimate knowledge of the company he worked for, the leisure of one who did not need to make a living by writing, and the authority of a superior status in the company. It is not surprising that he had the major share in that process of refinement whereby the drama was transmuted in the 1590s and brought to full maturity.

Other chapters in this book will display the nature and scope of Shakespeare's development, and the degree of refinement he achieved during the first part of his career. His dramatic and literary success in the 1590s was based on the development of a regular professional theatre and a professional drama drawing on the best talents of the time, and uniting in the work of the two companies, the Admiral's and Chamberlain's Men, an inheritance of a scholarly drama, often on classical themes as represented in the plays of the Children's companies, and an inheritance of a popular, vigorous drama, as represented in the plays of the Queen's Men. These traditions, brought together and given new life by the University Wits, sustained the public theatres which, prior to 1600, were the only theatres operating in London, and which drew their audience from all classes of society. In this way the development of a rich drama which might appeal to everyone at some level was ensured. Many dramatists of considerable power became productive during this decade, and helped to give a context and stimulus to Shakespeare, who had the genius to make the most of the possibilities offered to him by his theatre. He learned how to write to please at once the aristocrat (A *Midsummer Night's Dream* was probably written for private performance to celebrate a nobleman's wedding), the scholar, the citizen and the groundling; and from his success and enormous prestige by 1600, it is

apparent that, more than any of his contemporaries, he fulfilled Dekker's pattern of a perfect poet, as one who

Can call the *Banish'd Auditor* home, And tye
His Eare (with golden chaines) to his Melody:
Can draw with *Adamantine Pen* (even Creatures
Forg'de out of the *Hammer*,) on tiptoe, to *Reach-up*,
And (from *Rare silence*) clap their *Brawny hands*,
T' *Applaud*, what their *charm'd soule* scarce understands.

Note

Biography: Robert Greene, 1558-1592. Born in Norwich, the son of a saddler, he was educated at St. John's College and Clare Hall, Cambridge, and incorporated at Oxford in 1588. While still at Cambridge in 1580 he wrote his first prose work, *Mamillia*. Greene married a gentleman's daughter, Dorothy, by whom he had a child in 1584 or 1585. Some two years later Greene left his wife and went to London, where he died in poverty, after a dissipated life, on 3 September 1592.

Works. Between 1580 and 1592 Greene wrote innumerable prose works, including *Pandosto*, (the source of *The Winter's Tale*), the *Conny-Catching Pamphlets*, which give a picture of the low life of the times, and *The Groatworth of Wit*, which contains the famous attack on Shakespeare. Greene probably began writing for the stage in 1587, his first play being *Alphonsus, King of Aragon*, which was followed by *The Looking Glass for London and England* (with Thomas Lodge), *Orlando Furioso*, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* and *James IV*. Also attributed to him are *Selimus*, *George a Greene*, *Lochrine* and parts of the *Henry VI* plays.

Modern Editions. The only complete edition of Greene's works is that edited by A. B. Grosart, *The Life and Complete Works of Robert Greene* (Huth Library, 1881-6). The Shakespeare Institute and the University of Alabama are currently collaborating in the preparation of a new complete edition of Greene's works under the general editorship of I. A. Shapiro and Johnstone Parr. J. C. Collins edited the *Plays and Poems* . . . (2 vols., 1905); the plays are also to be found in A. Dyce's *Dramatic Works of George Peele and Robert Greene* (1861, revised from his edition of 1831), and T. H. Dickinson's Mermaid edition (1909). In the following chapter references are to Collins' edition.

Scholarship and Criticism. The best biographies of Greene are provided by J. C. Collins (Vol. I of his edition), and R. Pruvost, *Robert Greene et ses Romans* (Paris, 1938). Good introductions to Greene's work are those by J. C. Jordan, *Robert Greene* (Columbia, 1915), and T. H. Dickinson (Mermaid edition). Recent discussions of Greene's drama are to be found in M. Parrott's *Shakespearean Comedy* (Princeton, 1949), E. C. Pettet's *Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition* (1949), and Muriel C. Bradbrook's *The Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy* (1955). There is a bibliography by S. A. Tannenbaum, *Elizabethan Bibliographies No. 8: Robert Greene* (New York, 1939), to which a supplement was published in 1945.

II

The Comedy of Greene and Shakespeare

NORMAN SANDERS



AMONG writers on Shakespeare, voices have often been raised to lament the unaccountable dearth of good critical works on his comedies. The reason for this lack of critical success lies primarily in the form of comedy that Shakespeare adopted. 'Romantic comedy', by its very nature, defies the critical approaches that have proved so fruitful for the tragedies. The heterogeneous elements which constitute it, its lack of reputable theatre ancestry in Shakespeare's day, its sensitivity to contemporary circumstances, and the apparently casual forms it assumed—all combine to make Elizabethan romantic comedy so delicate a balance between the comic and the romantic, that each successful example of it is a small miracle. As Johnson has rightly observed 'They seem to be instinct' rather than skill.

The scholar who tries to trace possible influences on Shakespearean comedy faces a difficulty akin to that of the literary critics, and for much the same reasons. Any influences that may be isolated or measured emerge as only superficially important for the light they throw on Shakespeare's developing comic vision. Both John Lyly and Robert Greene have long been recognized as influential predecessors of Shakespeare, yet the nature of the influence they exercised is quite different in kind. The extent of Shakespeare's debt to Lyly has been thoroughly charted in terms of plot manipulation, poetic mannerisms, character types and so on. These dramatic and poetic skills, in the main formulated by Lyly, and adopted by Shakespeare, are those which any apprentice dramatist, aiming at popular success, would naturally and consciously set himself to learn. They are the tools of Shakespeare's early comic art and as such influenced his comic vision only peripherally. So that, even with the researches of A. W. Bond¹ and others in mind, we perceive at once, that the comic world which is presented to us in *Love's Labour's*

¹ *The Works of John Lyly* (1902) I, 164 ff.

Lost or *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is fundamentally different from that of *Campaspe* or *Endimion*. Nevertheless, what debt there is can be stated in fairly concrete terms; it can be assessed and proven.

With Greene, the case is quite different. Any influence he may have exercised on Shakespeare is impossible to prove in the same terms as those used for Lyly. For, in the first place, Greene and Shakespeare wrote romantic comedy, and, consequently, were indebted for much of their material and some of their methods to the same prototypes both in romance proper and in the purely comic elements in English drama before 1590. Secondly, both were writing in this form for the public theatres at a time of rapid artistic and theatrical growth, at a time when circumstances of literary creation were such that any writer's original idea became overnight the property of his fellows, when each experiment in craftsmanship was fair game for anyone's appropriation, and when the interplay of influences ranged from flagrant plagiarism through unconscious and formative imitation to complete artistic assimilation. One result of these points of contact is that those special elements in Greene's plays which drama historians have seen as being adopted by Shakespeare could equally well have found their way into his plays without Greene's help; that, in fact, the similarity observed in their handling of semi-serious main plot and comic sub-plot, in their making romantic love the focal point of comedy, in their alternating love poetry and idiomatic prose could be due to the comic dramatic form they employed.

It is for this reason that words like 'debt' and 'influence' with their usual connotations in literary scholarship are unsuitable and inaccurate for describing the relationship which exists between Greene's comedies and Shakespeare's. The similar elements which have given rise to the use of such words are only the externals of a fundamental kinship or sympathy in comic view which the two dramatists shared. Any 'influence' which Greene had on Shakespeare must be looked for in the indeterminate areas of comic vision, in the special quality of their imaginative response to life and art as expressed in their comedies. Naturally, any such similarity can only be seen in terms of their ordering of action, creation of character, and their choice of materials and situations. But, if the kinship I have suggested is real, what is important is not so much the likeness of the ingredients they employed but the reasons for their choice and their methods of using these elements to give fullest expression to their comic view of life. It is, therefore, impossible to see any close correspondence between any one of Greene's plays and one of Shakespeare's.

The evidence of their kinship is diffused through all the comedies of both.



Before attempting to assess the extent of this kinship, it is necessary to determine the salient features of Greene's comic view, and how far he was successful in giving them dramatic shape.² These features are best seen in their emergence, in his two least successful plays, *Alphonsus King of Aragon*, and *Orlando Furioso*. Both these plays were written while Greene was consciously submitting himself to the influence of Marlowe, and more specifically to that of *Tamburlaine*. *Alphonsus* is a crude but palpable imitation of Marlowe's play, written with the evident intention of rivalling it in popularity; *Orlando* is a curious patchwork piece mingling serious imitation and parody of *Tamburlaine* with satire of *The Spanish Tragedy*. The contrast between these plays and *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* is so great that Marc Parrott has remarked

Greene's sudden leap from the horseplay of *Orlando* to the comedy of *Friar Bacon* . . . resembles those sudden changes in the biological world that have received the name of mutation rather than evolution.

This is but a half-truth, for in the two earlier plays there are definite indications of the characteristic form and method of his later work. Moreover, the fact that these indications are present yet totally alien to the nature of the play he was consciously emulating would suggest that they are a reflection of his natural manner of writing.

In the first two acts of *Alphonsus*, Greene slavishly imitates *Tamburlaine I* in characters, incident and language. By the third act, it must have been obvious to him that his copy was not gathering the momentum of the original. He therefore introduced, at this point, new material in a futile attempt to bolster up his play. It is this new material which is of interest in view of his later development. In III. ii the dramatic focus shifts from *Alphonsus* to the court of the Turkish emperor, Amurack. By supernatural means it is revealed to the emperor in a dream that *Alphonsus* shall defeat him and marry his daughter, Iphigina. His wife, Fausta, and Iphigina quarrel with him over his future acquiescence to this prophecy and are banished the court. Hereafter the dramatic emphasis is on the love of *Alphonsus* and Iphigina, and the *Tamburlaine*-like rise to

² For the purpose of this discussion, I am limiting the Greene canon to those plays of sole and undisputed authorship. I, therefore, ignore *Selimus*, *The Looking Glass for London and England*, and *George a Greene*.

power of the hero and the wars which effect it are merely the context of this love. In III. iii Fausta and Iphigina meet Medea and the bulk of the scene is concerned with a discussion of the inevitability of the prophecy; Alphonsus meets Iphigina in V. ii during a battle, and declares his love for her only to be rejected; and the final scene is almost exclusively taken up with the attempts of Carinus, Alphonsus' father, to bring about a match between his son and the emperor's daughter.

Thus, in the latter half of the play we find Greene's interest and sympathy moving away from what we must call the main plot which was alien to his talents, and towards a sub-plot which included, for him, far more congenial material. It is also worth noting the way in which he attempts to connect the two plots. There are two scenes in which the supernatural element is introduced: III. ii where Medea conjures the ghost of Calchas, and IV. i where the stage is dominated by the Brazen Head of Mahomet, out of which the prophet utters his *double entendre* prophecies. Both scenes were obviously introduced for their value as spectacle, but, at the same time both contribute to forwarding the action, and serve by the subject matter to link the war theme and love theme.

In the characterization similar indications of Greene's true interests may be found. Only one of the persons in the play even suggests humanity: namely, Carinus. He is the sole representative of common sense, tenderness and homely wisdom. The natural sympathy Greene had for the character is hinted at in an early scene where he speaks two lines, the simplicity of which throws into harsh relief the empty bombast and pseudo-Marlovian ranting which surrounds them:

Bridle these thoughts, and learne the same of me,—
A quiet life doth passe an Emperie. (I. i. 145)

However, it is in the final scene that he becomes dominant. When the relationship between Alphonsus and Iphigina has reached a deadlock, it is Carinus who solves the difficulty. But, whether he addresses Alphonsus

How now, *Alphonsus*? you which have so long
Bene trained up in bloudie broyles of *Mars*,
What know you not, that Castles are not wonne
At first assault, and women are not wooed
When first their suters profer love to them?
(V. iii. 1808)

or Iphigina

The gods forbid that ere *Carinus* tongue
Should go about to make a mayd consent

Unto the thing which modestie denies:

.....

... since first *Alphonsus* eyes
Did hap to glaunce upon your heavenly hew,
And saw the rare perfection of the same,
He hath desired to become your spowse:

(V. i. 1832)

he speaks on behalf of love itself. His prominence in the final scene and the relative warmth that goes into his depiction is due to this function rather than his position as the father of the hero.

In *Orlando*, Greene made no attempt to adopt the material or situations of *Tamburlaine I*. The bulk of the play is concerned with Orlando's madness and the machinations of his rival, Sacripant.³ While Greene doubtless saw in these subjects an opportunity for spectacular action and stage effects, there are some scenes which suggest that he half-realized that certain of the situations he had selected had in them the seeds of romantic comedy. Here, unlike in *Alphonsus*, love of one kind or another is at the centre of the play, and many of the scenes seem designed to show different aspects of love. The theme is struck immediately in the opening scene, which sets forth the ritualistic element in wooing, in the formal declarations of love made by the princes who seek Angelica's hand. Each of the five suitors boasts his claim and dwells on the advantages of his own country, each ending with the refrain

But leaving these such glories as they be,
I love, my Lord; let that suffice for me.

Orlando, speaking last, sets himself apart from the others by the humble though vigorous expression of his love and his adaptation of the refrain

But leaving these such glories as they bee,
I love, my Lord;
Angelica her selfe shall speak for mee.

(I. i. 126)

This is ultimately the same device that Shakespeare was to use later and more subtly in the casket scenes in *The Merchant of Venice*, in the church scene in *Much Ado About Nothing*, in the Forest of Arden in *As You Like It*, and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

³ It should perhaps be noted that the text of the 1594 Q is in a very bad state, and obviously represents a shortened version of the original.

In subsequent scenes, Greene gives fuller treatment to the idea he but touched on in *Alphonsus*—namely, lovers separated by circumstances beyond their control, in this case, Angelica's banishment and Sacripant's plot. There is a hint too that he realized the comic possibilities of the lovers meeting at a time when normal expression of their love is impossible, and introduces an additional factor in that one of the pair is unrecognized by the other. Admittedly in this scene (III. iii) between the mad Orlando and the disguised Angelica, the full comic potentialities of the situation are largely unexplored. Nevertheless, its very use, together with the variations upon it in III. iii and V. i do suggest that Greene was aware of its importance in romantic comedy; that he realized such a device was an ideal one with which to lay bare the surprises, psychological quirks and inconsistencies of human love which constitute its logic in art as in life.

When Greene's departures from his source are considered, it is also evident that he made some attempt to show some of the multiple faces of love. Thus Sacripant, in Ariosto's poem merely mentioned as one of Angelica's suitors, is turned by Greene into a Machiavellian and presents the effects of cynicism and self-love on love:

First I must get the love of faire Angelica.
Now am I full of amorous conceits,
Not that I doubt to have what I desire,
But how I might best with mine honor woo:
Write, or intreate,—fie, that fitteth not;
Send by Ambassadors,—no, thats too base;
Flatly command,—I, thats for Sacrepant:
(I. i. 294)

Similarly, the scenes between Orlando and the clowns, Orgalio, Tom and Ralph, indicate Greene's awareness of the value of farcical comment on and irreverent contrast with the fervour of the lovers.

Thus, even in these unsuccessful early plays, Greene's themes, situations and methods may be traced. In his two later plays—*Friar Bacon* and *James IV*—he takes up all of them again and works with them unfettered by Marlowe's influence. It is in these plays that the kinship with Shakespeare's comedies may be seen most clearly. As with Greene, romantic love is central to Shakespeare's plays; it is not merely a subject for comment or satire, it is the very matter and fibre of each play. The comedies of both are comic explorations of the nature of love. Both writers realized that this exploration could not be achieved by adopting the

intrigue type comedy; love's many facets, its gradations and its effects could only be shown in the interplay of characters and situations to which the narrative form of comedy gave scope.



Although the basic plot of their comedies was a love story, neither Greene nor Shakespeare saw love as an isolated phenomenon in human life. For both, it is a power with connections which reach into every sphere of human activity; its qualities and the behaviour it provokes are a reflex of life as a whole. Its characteristics are self-denial, unselfishness, complete loyalty; its essence is giving. In the plays of both, therefore, the love story is set invariably in a larger context from which the difficulties of the lovers in part derive. The nature of this and the dramatic emphasis it receives may vary, but it is always present. Sometimes it 'frames' the love plot as in *James IV* where the relations between England and Scotland are a prominent topic at the beginning and end of the play,⁴ or in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where the fairy, moonlit world of the lovers is anchored at each end by an Athens of harsh fathers and the court of a clear-thinking duke.⁵ In other plays the material of the context threads its way through the whole play, sometimes running parallel to them, at others intimately connected. So, in *Friar Bacon*, our interest shifts from the English court or Bacon's Oxford to the rural love world of Margaret and Fressingfield; or, in *The Merchant of Venice* from Portia's Belmont to the Venice of Shylock.

However, this is not to say that either Greene or Shakespeare saw the lovers' world as being divorced from the other world. There is an interaction between the two in every case. The disorder which so often characterizes this larger world intrudes upon the lovers. Ateukin in *James IV* can whisper poison into James' ear or send an assassin in pursuit of Dorothea; Jaques in *As You Like It* can strike an alien note in the Forest of Arden; Mercade in *Love's Labour's Lost* dissolves the 'let's pretend' world of the King of Navarre and his companions in a single speech; and Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing* plots to prevent the marriage of Claudio and Hero, even as Friar Bacon uses his magic to stop the exchange of vows between Margaret and Lacy. Death, banishment, shipwreck, tyranny and lies are the qualities of this other world and they either affect the lovers directly or hover like distant clouds above them.

⁴ I see this as a development of the idea used in the last three acts of *Alphonsus*.

⁵ *As You Like It*, *Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Twelfth Night* are all variants of this structural pattern.

Yet in neither Greene nor Shakespeare are these factors serious impediments to the lovers themselves. They both saw that the ideal love with which they were concerned could affect the other world fundamentally, as well as be influenced by it. In its most obvious form, it is shown by the active intervention of the heroines. Thus Dorothea in *James IV*, by her forgiveness, not only wins back her erring husband but effectually brings to an end the wars between England and Scotland. Similarly in *The Merchant of Venice* Portia personally foils Shylock's murderous intentions. The actions of both women are symbolic of the power of love itself—its generosity, mercy and its charity. Both dramatists were at pains to link the two worlds in such ways. It is true that Greene did so superficially, while Shakespeare's interrelations work at every level, but in the artistic reason for this linking they stand on common ground.

In addition to giving depth to the quality of love by relating it to a larger context, both dramatists gave it width by dealing with different manifestations and degrees of it in each play. In all their comedies they contrive to have the love of the protagonists surrounded by less perfect representations of love's power. In Greene the relationship between the various suits is often tenuous. He relies chiefly for his effects on their juxtaposition, only occasionally on their interrelation. In *Friar Bacon*, the varieties of love are centred upon Margaret. He sets side by side Edward's royal and privileged infatuation, the senseless and violent rivalry of Serlsbie and Lambeth and the erratic passion of Lacy. In *James IV* the interest is divided between two women, Ida and Dorothea, but the method is the same. The king, James, links the two in his scorning of Dorothea's faithful love and his unlawful lust for Ida, which in turn is contrasted with Sir Bertram's legitimate wooing. Shakespeare's use of multiple love suits requires no comment. His superiority to Greene in this respect is obvious. But here again, the ingredients are the same in both and to some extent their methods are similar. An episode in *James IV* illustrates at once the basic similarity and the difference in range and subtlety. Towards the end of the play, Dorothea, disguised as a page is rescued from the assassin, Jaques, by Sir Cuthbert Anderson who takes the wounded queen to his home. There, within the space of two short scenes, Lady Anderson falls in love with the disguised Dorothea, and, on discovering her real identity, repents her 'insaciat lust'. Hurried and unsatisfactory as these scenes are and though of only slight bearing on the main plot, they do show an awareness on Greene's part of the dramatic possibilities of the disguised heroine and thus are in the same category as those between Viola and Olivia in *Twelfth Night*.

For the basic love situation at the centre of their comedies, Greene and Shakespeare were ultimately indebted to their common prototypes in romance proper. From these they took over also one of their salient features—'the theme of faithful love subjected to some grievous and abnormal strain'.⁶ The reasons for and conditions of such situations vary considerably. Sometimes they take the form of natural mischance, as the shipwreck in *Twelfth Night*, or the pressures of international affairs, as the wars in *Alphonsus*, or the whims of a tyrannical ruler as in *As You Like It*. At others, they are due to the unmotivated evil directed specifically against or indirectly affecting the lovers themselves, and working through individuals such as Ateukin in *James IV*, Sacripant in *Orlando Furioso*, Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing*, or Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*.⁷ Yet neither Greene nor Shakespeare was content to allow their lovers, and more particularly their heroines, to appear as puppets either jerked by fate or manipulated by villainy. Both, in adapting this romance cliché for use in drama made a similar and fundamental change. In every case, one or both of the lovers—albeit in varying degrees—bear some responsibility for the unnatural course their wooing is forced to take, or for the mental or physical barrier which prevents the natural expression of their love.

In most of Greene's and Shakespeare's comedies, the barrier between the lovers reflects some delusion or spiritual blindness in one or both of them as well as in the characters who surround them. Indicative of this are the conscious and unconscious violations of one's nature which is basic in many of the comic situations. At certain points their handling of this idea is similar. Pretences and delusions of all kinds flourish: in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Valentine plays the outlaw he is not, just as Lacy, in *Friar Bacon*, plays the country swain; Feste acts the part of Sir Topas, as Ralph, in *Friar Bacon*, plays the role of the prince; James IV forgets his true nature so far as to plot the death of his wife, just as Claudio, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, forgets his to cause the apparent death of his wife-to-be. Frequently, the pretence is given a visual form, the commonest being a change of clothing. For example, Prince Edward, in *Friar Bacon*, in throwing off his princely nature to seduce Margaret, gives his clothes to his fool, Ralph; Malvolio, hoodwinked by Sir Toby and his crew, assumes yellow stockings and cross garters; and Bottom, the lover of the Fairy Queen, wears his ass's head and robes of Pyramus.

⁶ E. C. Pettet, *Shakespeare and the Romance Tradition* (1949), p. 24.

⁷ Puck and Friar Bacon have dramatically the same function, though they are, of course, benevolent versions.

The most significant of all disguises are those of the heroines. In all of these delightful transvestites—Julia, Viola, Dorothea, Rosalind—their disguise is the ‘ocular proof’ of the obstacle between their lovers and themselves, it is the visual symbol of their separation. In Greene’s plays, disguise has this function only. For example, Dorothea, in travelling from her husband’s court dressed as a page, meets neither her erring husband nor Ida, the object of his desires. In Shakespeare, on the other hand, the fullest possibilities of the device are realized, both in *As You Like It*, where the heroine’s disguise gives the lovers greater freedom of expression, and in *Twelfth Night*, where the boy’s dress of Viola enables her to span the worlds of true love and infatuation, in the role of a go-between.⁸ Here again the difference is not one of kind or conception, it is of range and execution.

An illustration of, at once, the basic kinship and immeasurable difference between Greene and Shakespeare is their use of disguise to point the strength of their heroines’ love while suffering from the hard conditions the disguise forces upon them. In IV. iv Dorothea brings together in a single speech the ideas of her love, her unhappiness, the limitations of her sex and disadvantages of her disguise:

Ah *Nano*, I am wearie of these weedes,
 Wearie to weeld this weapon that I bare,
 Wearie of love from whom my woe proceedes,
 Wearie of toyle, since I have lost my deare.
 O wearie life, where wanteth no distresse,
 But every thought is paid with heavinesse!
 (IV. iv. 1646)

This is but one remove from Julia’s lament in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*:

Alas, poor Proteus! thou hast entertain’d
 A fox to be the shepherd of thy lambs.
 Alas, poor fool! why do I pity him
 That with his very heart despiseth me?
 Because he loves her, he despiseth me;
 Because I love him, I must pity him.
 (IV. iv. 96)

And this, in turn, is but a primitive version of the situation which leads

⁸ As I have remarked above the scenes between Dorothea and Lady Anderson suggest that Greene was aware of the potentialities of this situation.

to Viola's beautiful oblique expression of her love, as she implicitly laments with Julia and Dorothea the pathos of her position:

My father had a daughter loved a man,
As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman
I should your lordship . . .
. . . she pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief.

(II. iv. 110)

However, the lovers' separation is not always visually represented. Sometimes, it is shown by their words and actions alone. In *Friar Bacon*, for example, the breach between Margaret and Lacy, caused by the latter's assumed unfaithfulness is more serious in Margaret's eyes (and unresisted by her) than that intended by Prince Edward which only produced a re-affirmation of her vows. Similarly the gulfs between Beatrice and Benedick, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, or between Petruchio and Katherine, in *The Taming of the Shrew*, are effected by the social postures the lovers themselves assume rather than by any outside influence.⁹

The importance to be attached to characterization in Shakespeare's comedies is a much-disputed topic.¹⁰ Although no one would deny the life-like qualities many of them possess, it is nevertheless true that most of them are only intermittently 'alive'. On many occasions, Shakespeare seems deliberately to sacrifice consistency in characterization to some overall effect—particularly in his final scenes. One reason for this is that in his comedy, unlike his tragedy, the psychology of individual characters is much less important than what may be termed the psychology of the immediate emotional situation. For it is the situations and their place in the complete comic pattern that are significant. Shakespeare seems to aim at momentary conviction rather than overall consistency in his comic characters, and Greene's method of portraying character is similar to Shakespeare's in this respect. Their common approach may be

⁹ This is a complex development of the idea used by Greene in *Alphonsus*. Iphigina's excuse to Carinus in the last scene

But Cupid cannot enter in the brest
Where Mars before had tooke possession:

might well serve as a motto for Beatrice's and Benedick's verbal battles.

¹⁰ E. Dowden, J. Palmer and H. B. Charlton see it as 'the whole secret' of the comedies, while to E. C. Pettet and J. R. Brown it is less central.

seen most easily in the handling of their villains—by which I mean either those characters who plot deliberately to thwart or destroy love (for example, Ateukin and Don John), or those who, at certain points in the play, have the effect of doing so (for example, Prince Edward, Friar Bacon, Claudio, Duke Frederick and Puck). The conscious or unconscious ‘villainy’ of all these characters is never stressed so as to upset the balance of the plays within which they appear. Yet they carry just sufficient conviction for us to believe in the reality of their ‘villainy’ while they are on the stage. Their role is to provide an opposition to the power of love which, in the face of this opposition, finds its most complete expression. It is irrelevant to seek an explanation of the malignity of Don John or Ateukin. We do not do so in the theatre and should not do so in the study. Dramatically it is effective, in that it is sufficiently ‘real’ for us to accept it and pass on to what chiefly concerns us—that is, its effects on Claudio, Hero, Benedick and Beatrice, or on Dorothea, James IV and Ida.

A modification of this approach to character may be seen also in the handling of the more central figures. For, even these may blossom into life or be reduced to a cipher in accordance with the demands of the general pattern of the play. Greene’s way of doing this is naturally more primitive, less subtle than Shakespeare’s, but in it there may be seen some of the methods the two dramatists shared. The handling of the character of Margaret in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* may be taken as an illustration.

Margaret first appears in the report of Edward as a typical Romance heroine, raised by metaphor to take her place with the classical goddesses:

I tell thee, *Lacie*, that her sparkling eyes
 Doe lighten forth sweet Loves alluring fire:
 And in her tresses she doth fold the looks
 Of such as gaze upon her golden haire:
 Her bashful white mixt with the mornings red
Luna doth boast upon her lovely cheekes:
 Her front is beauties table where she paints
 The glories of her gorgeous excellence:
 Her teeth are shelves of pretious Margarites,
 Richly enclosed with ruddie curroll cleves.

(I. i. 52).

This impression is later in the scene modified by a further word picture of Margaret as the fair maid of Fressingfield—still idealized but also setting her in the context of her ‘huswiferie’:

When as she swept like *Venus* through the house, . . .
 And there amongst the cream-boles she did shine,
 As *Pallace* mongst her Princely huswiferie:
 She turnd her smocke over her Lilly armes,
 And dived them into milke to run her cheese:
 But, whiter than the milke, her christall skin,
 Checked with lines of Azure, made her blush,
 That art or nature durst bring for compare.

(74)

But when she appears on the stage subsequently at the Fair of Fressingfield (I. iii), she takes her place as the unassuming country lass, courted by the disguised Lacy. After falling in love with Lacy, she is gentle, sportive and coy in turn—merely an attractive girl, happy and confident in her love, the essence of which is giving:

What likes my lord is pleasing unto mee.

Then in III. i Edward confronts her and her lover in anger, accusing Lacy of breaking faith with him and threatening him with death. The situation contains one of the basic elements of the Romance convention: the conflict between the demands of love and those of friendship. Edward's anger is directed against Lacy chiefly on account of his violation of the laws of friendship:

Injurious *Lacie*, did I love thee more
 Than *Alexander* his *Hephestion*?
 Did I unfould the passions of my love,
 And locke them in the closset of thy thoughts?
 Wert thou to *Edward* second to himselfe,
 Sole freind and partner of his secreat loves,
 And could a glaunce of fading bewtie breake
 The inchained fetters of such privat freindes?

(947)

All of this is in accordance with the Romance tradition and Margaret makes the apologia that is expected of her:

Then, worthy *Edward*, measure with thy minde,
 If womens favours will not force men fall,
 If bewtie, and if darts of persing love,
 Is not of force to bury thoughts of friendes.

(971)

Up to this point Greene is dramatizing in a skilful way a typical Romance situation. But when the scene is taken as part of the design of the play

as a whole, this conflict assumes greater significance. For, in effect, what is happening is that tyranny, lust and infatuation are threatening the ideal of true love which is basic to Greene's comic view. It is at this point that Margaret displays characteristics for which the audience is largely unprepared; she becomes, because the dramatic moment demands it, the spokesman for love itself.

Edward seeks to win Margaret from Lacy with seductive visions of wealth and power:

In Frigats bottomd with rich *Sethin* planks,
Topt with the loftie firs of *Libanon*,
Stemd and incast with burnisht Ivorie,
And overlaid with plates of *Persian* wealth,
Like *Thetis* shalt thou wanton on the waves,
And draw the Dolphins to thy lovely eyes,
To daunce lavoltas in the purple streames.

(976)

Margaret answers him respectfully in his own coin, but her final couplet, in its directness, recalls the simplicity of her attitude to love, from which she is to derive the strength to defy the Prince:

. . . if *Joves* great roialtie
Sent me such presents as to *Danae*;
If *Phoebus* tired in *Latonas* webs,
Came courting from the beautie of his lodge;
The dulcet tunes of frolicke *Mercurie*,
Nor all the wealth heavens treasurie affoords,
Should make me leave lord *Lacie* or his love.

(990)

Edward and Lacy continue to play out their conventional roles with attitudes appropriate to their stations:

EDWARD. *Lacie* shall die as traitor to his Lord.
LACIE. I have deserved it, *Edward*, act it well.

(1012)

The very melodrama of their lines and postures serves to throw into relief Margaret's simple practical question as Edward is about to carry out his threats:

What hopes the Prince to gaine by *Lacies* death?

The reply Edward gives her:

To end the loves twixt him and *Margaret*.

is not as before the product of sudden anger or thwarted lust; it constitutes a denial of the eternal quality of love itself as Margaret (and Greene) sees it. As such, it serves to raise Margaret, for the moment, from the Suffolk milkmaid to the defender of the concept of love which is embodied in the play:

Why, thinks King *Henries* sonne that *Margrets* love
Hangs in the uncertaine ballance of proud time?
That death shall make a discord of our thoughts?
No, stab the earle, and fore the morning sun
Shall vaunt him thrice over the loftie east,
Margaret will meet her *Lacie* in the heavens.

(1016)

It is this that brings Edward to his proper self and his vow to 'make a vertue of this fault'. After his repentance, Margaret maintains her impersonal and judicial role for a few lines:

And doth the English Prince mean true?
Will he vouchsafe to cease his former loves,
And yeeld the title of a countrie maid
Unto Lord *Lacie*?

(1055)

before slipping back into her own person.

Later in the play, after hearing of Lacy's supposed unfaithfulness, she offers no comparable protest, for, against an assault from such a quarter, she has no power. She is sufficiently convincing in both her renunciation of the world and in her rejection of her nun's habit to become Lacy's wife. There is no 'consistency' in such characterization as this, nor was any intended. Margaret acts in accordance with the demands of the situations which are arranged and varied by the playwright to embody his comic vision of love as entertainingly and as completely as possible.

The fluctuations seen in Margaret's character and the responses they demand are of the same kind as, say, those differences between the Lady Portia of Belmont and 'Dr. Balthazar', or between the Olivia of the middle scenes of *Twelfth Night* and that of the last act. Similarly, Lacy's behaviour in offering the Prince his mistress is on a par with Valentine's proffered surrender of Sylvia to Proteus; and Edward's sudden repentance is but a variation of Claudio's acceptance of Hero's cousin as his bride.

★ ★ ★

The love plot is not the sole interest in the comedies of either Greene or Shakespeare. Both dramatists use double or multiple plots. The love plot is given an extra dimension by the use of such sub-plots, which also generally contain the more broadly comic or farcical elements. Shakespeare's skill in interrelating his various plots far outstrips Greene's, but they had in common the perception of the dramatic value of this interplay and some of the methods by which it could be achieved. In common with many other dramatists they use the broadly comic elements for implicit or explicit comment on the serious plot, for relief and variety of interest and for pure clowning. The similarity between their individual clowns has often been noticed: Launce, Speed, Gobbo, Slipper, Nano, Miles and Ralph are of a common stock. But it is in the linking of their plots to give an extra dimension to each that Shakespeare and Greene are akin. In *Friar Bacon* the Bacon-Miles-Vandermast plot runs parallel to the Margaret-Edward-Lacy plot. Each has independent dramatic interest, but Greene takes pains to link them closely at one point. In II. iii, Edward successfully persuades Bacon at Oxford to use his 'prospective glasse' to spy on Margaret and Lacy at Fressingfield. When he observes them about to be married by Friar Bungay, he induces Bacon to prevent the wedding. This Bacon does by striking Bungay dumb as he is about to perform the ceremony. The implications of this scene are taken up later and Bacon's relationship with the love plot are seen to exist on another, more symbolic level. In IV. iii the two sons of Serlsbie and Lambert witness in the same glass the fatal duel between their fathers, and as a result stab each other. Bacon immediately renounces his magic and breaks his glass. The parallel this scene affords with the earlier one cannot be accidental, and Bacon's repentance, which is often seen as mis-managed, may be seen on one level as a refutation of those skills which enabled him to thwart true love in lust's cause. 'This glass prospective worketh many woes', not merely the deaths of the two young men. Here Greene is employing basically the same method that Shakespeare uses, in *Much Ado About Nothing* where the 'shallow fools', Dogberry and Verges, bring to light the Don John intrigue; in *Twelfth Night*, to draw together Malvolio's affairs and Viola's; and with exquisite art in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to weave into a dream his three threads: fairies, mortals and mechanicals.

This scene from *Friar Bacon* is of greater significance for the hint it provides of Greene's comic attitude, and its basic similarity with Shakespeare's. At certain points in their works both dramatists make the audience aware of the dramatic illusion itself. The use of disguise and the

nature of the various 'roles' some characters play is part of this but it may also be seen at work in the devising of whole scenes. John Palmer has noticed¹¹ that Shakespeare frequently has a character or group of characters standing as intermediary between the audience and part of the action: in the letter scene in *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio's gullibility is witnessed and commented on by Maria, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Fabian behind the garden hedge; when Benedick and Beatrice are caught in the snares laid for them by Hero, Claudio, Don Pedro and Margaret, the trappers are on hand to witness their success; when Titania is enamoured of Bottom, both Puck and Oberon are there to enjoy her delusion, and Puck is present to provide a commentary on 'what fools these mortals be' as the four lovers play out their farce. In the scene from *Friar Bacon* mentioned above, Bacon himself and Edward stand between the audience on the one hand and Margaret, Lacy and Bungay on the other in much the same way as do Maria, Don Pedro, Puck and the rest. 'Sit still, my lord, and marke the comedie,' says Bacon to Edward, and this, in effect, is what both Greene and Shakespeare are saying to their audiences: 'Mark this comedy within the comedy, watch both the players and their audience.' We are no longer detached spectators, we are drawn into the world of both comedies; we feel that we may be 'on either side of the hedge'.

Greene carries this device a stage further in *James IV*, in which the story of James and Dorothea is set within the framework involving Oberon, the king of the fairies, the misanthropic Scotsman, Bohan, and his two sons, Slipper and Nano. The fragility and suppleness of the limits of drama are stressed; the gap between audience and action becomes blurred as Oberon steps out of the framework to save Slipper from the results of his knavery, or as Nano accompanies Dorothea on her journey. The 'reality' of Dorothea's sufferings, or of Ateukin's evil, or of James' lust is at once shattered and reinforced; and the audience are simultaneously distanced from and brought closer to the world of the play. Even at the end of the play, when Greene drops the framework material, Nano, who stepped out of it at the beginning of the play, is present as its representative to sound the last note of the play.

Shakespeare, with greater skill, works with the same device. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, we find it in a simple form in the employment of the masque of the nine worthies in the final scene. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the world of the theatre becomes part of the play's vision through the speeches of Theseus, the Pyramus and Thisbe playlet, the rehearsals

¹¹ *Comic Characters of Shakespeare* (1947) pp. xiii-xiv.

of the mechanicals and the poetic imagery. In other plays, too, though less obvious in their structure, this consciousness of drama itself shows up in different forms.¹² Most of the final scenes have an almost green-room atmosphere of actors stepping out of their parts: 'Were you the doctor and I knew you not?' asks Bassanio at the end of *The Merchant of Venice*; 'Behold her that gave aim to all thy oaths,' cries Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; Hero's cousin is transformed into Hero herself by the removal of a veil in *Much Ado About Nothing*; and Viola and Rosalind change from Cesario and Ganymede within the space of a few lines. In some cases, the actors do step out of their roles on the stage: thus Rosalind, Puck and Feste speak as actors directly to the audience.

One fact emerges from the above discussion—namely, that Greene was a far more wasteful dramatist than Shakespeare in his use of comic materials. Symbols, limpid verse and colloquial prose, stage effects, realistic characters, good dramatic situations, farce, knock-about comedy and comic devices, satire and the supernatural all find their way into his two plays. Some of these elements are drawn together at certain points, at others they run parallel to each other without interrelation. Yet all of these ingredients and the relationships that he half-saw between them have in them the seeds of a comic vision akin to Shakespeare's. The overall magnitude of Shakespeare's achievement far surpasses that of Greene, but, at bottom, the interplay of thought and feeling, the detachment and passionate conviction, the type of self-negation which produces an impression of definite personality, the presence of a positive benevolent moral force behind the plays—these are the same in both authors; the difference lies in range, powers of selection, subtlety, depth, but not in kind.

Between *Friar Bacon* and *James IV* it is possible to trace a development which is similar to Shakespeare's own between his early comedies and his last plays—that is, from romantic comedy to dramatic romance. In *James IV* the evil which is a product of the protagonist's weakness is far more convincingly drawn than in *Friar Bacon*, as are the sufferings of the heroine. The prominence given to such scenes as James and Ateukin plotting Dorothea's death or Ida's seduction makes it difficult to accept the comic *dénouement* and the quick repentance of James. The presence of death, lust, cruelty, misanthropy, treachery are too harshly portrayed to be truly counterbalanced by the fidelity, charm and gentle humour of some of the characters, or even softened by the rougher comic elements.

¹² The whole action of *Much Ado About Nothing*, for example, depends upon a succession of deliberately contrived 'playlets'.

The weight of evil in the play is shown to be that which is transcended by other qualities rather than shrugged off with a happy ending. The response demanded by the play is nearer that demanded by *Cymbeline* or *Pericles* than *Friar Bacon* or *As You Like It*. If the kinship between Shakespeare and Greene which I have suggested above is real, it would appear that the development from romantic comedy to romance was a natural one. In Shakespeare's last plays, there is a new reliance on the impact of narrative, a greater apparent simplicity in his use of symbols, a new type of heroine and a greater awareness of evil, the necessity for forgiveness, resignation and the unifying power of love. In many respects they are close to the world of *James IV*. Dorothea is of the same family as Imogen, and Ateukin as that of Iachimo. One wonders whether it was more than a mere accident that Shakespeare was reading *Pandosto* in c. 1610; whether Shakespeare recognized consciously or sub-consciously the kinship I have been suggesting.

U. M. Ellis-Fermor has recently written of Greene¹³

His was a pervasive genius; . . . It took nothing by storm, as did Marlowe's, either in thought or in language; but the effects of its influence, though harder to define, were to be found in some surprising places, sometimes, we suspect, among writers who were unconscious of its operation.

I consider Shakespeare's comedies to be one of these 'places'.

¹³ 'Marlowe and Greene: A note on their relationship as Dramatic Artists' in *Studies in Honor of T. W. Baldwin* (Urbana, 1958), p. 147.

Note

First Edition. The original text of *The Comedy of Errors* is that of the First Folio, 1623 (facsimiles by S. Lee (1902) and, less satisfactory, by H. Kokeritz and C. T. Prouty (1955); Booth's type-facsimile appeared in 1862-4). No other text affords evidence of what Shakespeare wrote.

Modern Editions. Pending up-to-date annotated editions (the new Arden, edited by R. A. Foakes, is near publication), those in the old Arden, Yale and New Cambridge (1922) are useful. Among plain texts preference may be given to P. Alexander's in his *Complete Works* . . . (1951). On textual matters consult W. W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio* (1955).

Date. It seems certain that the play was performed at Gray's Inn, 28 December 1594, when S. Thomas, *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1956) believes it was new; P. Alexander, *Shakespeare's Life and Art* (1939) dates it before August 1589, and T. W. Baldwin, *Shakespeare's Five-Act Structure* (1947) in winter 1589-90. H. Brooks finds the vengeance on Pinch indebted to the forcible shaving of Edward II in Marlowe, suggesting a date c. 1592-4; 1592 suits other supposed echoes and allusions, that to Henry of Navarre having most force between 1589-1593.

Sources. A principal intrigue from Plautus' *Menaechmi*, with elaborations from his *Amphitruo*, is set within the Egeon story, for which suggestions came from Gascoigne's *Supposes* (1566, published 1575), and/or its originals in Ariosto, and the tale of Apollonius of Tyre, retold in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, VIII, and Twine's *Patterne of Painefull Adventures* (1576, n.d. and 1607). The probable sources are more numerous and more closely combined than this statement indicates, as this chapter shows. G. Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. I (1957) reprints *Supposes*, Warner's translation of *Menaechmi* (1595), extracts from *Amphitruo* (trans. Sugden) and from Gower: Twine is reprinted in *Shakespeare's Library* (ed. W. C. Hazlitt, Pt. I. iv). See further T. W. Baldwin; and K. Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources*, Vol. I (1957).

Scholarship and Criticism. Among general studies may be cited H. B. Charlton's *Shakespearian Comedy* (1938), M. C. Bradbrook's *Growth and Structure of Elizabethan Comedy* (1955), J. R. Brown's *Shakespeare and his Comedies* (1957) and M. Doran's *Endeavors of Art* (1954); further relevant studies are H. T. Price's *Construction in Shakespeare* (1951), W. H. Clemen's *Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (1951) and J. W. Lever's *Elizabethan Love Sonnet* (1956). Among articles may be mentioned N. Coghill's 'The Basis of Shakespeare's Comedy', *Essays and Studies* (1950), Cornelia Coulter's 'The Plautine Tradition in Shakespeare', *JEGP* (1912), and H. Craig's 'Motivation in Shakespeare's Choice of Materials', *Shakespeare Survey* (1951); J. R. Brown has analysed 'The Interpretation of Shakespeare's Comedies, 1900-1953', *Shakespeare Survey* (1955).

III

Themes and Structure in 'The Comedy of Errors'

HAROLD BROOKS



FOUR of Shakespeare's comedies, there is little doubt, are earlier than the rest: *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Love's Labour's Lost*. Their chronological sequence is uncertain. I incline to think them all subsequent to *Richard III* (c. 1591) and conjecture c. 1592 for *The Comedy of Errors*. The neo-classical features in *Errors* and *The Shrew* may associate them with the Ovidian narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Lucrece* (1594); though I should like to think also that behind them lie youthful experiments in school drama. For if, as Beeston related, Shakespeare was formerly a schoolmaster in the country, and if he had worked in Latin and neo-classical drama with the boys, this would admirably account for the command he shows, from the very outset of his career as a playwright, of the elements of dramatic construction.

No extant play of his, however early, lacks evidence of this command. It operates on the large scale and the small. *The Comedy of Errors* has its large dramatic design, but is no less remarkable for its controlled detail, unparalleled at this date, except in *The Spanish Tragedy*, outside Shakespeare's other plays. His handling of the lesser units of structure, from the scene downwards, is already sure, and indeed within its conventions brilliant. These units include the scene, a new one beginning whenever the stage is clear; the sub-scene, or *scène* as understood in French drama, a new one beginning whenever the group on stage is altered by anyone leaving or joining it; the passage of dialogue or the set speech, more than one, sometimes, going to make up the *scène*; besides every physical action, whether procession, brawl, or bit of minor business. Fully to appreciate the close bonding of such units in the structure one has to ask what is contributed by every passage as it occurs, and how it is inter-related with others throughout the play. Some illustration is possible, however, by taking a single scene. Act I scene 2 will serve, the better as it is not exceptionally highly wrought. Yet even a scene so expository

(being the first of the main action) is not allowed to lack the immediate interest that holds an audience. Shakespeare has already the art of fulfilling, and with the economy that secures dramatic compression, three principal requirements of dramatic structure: retrospect, preparation, and immediate interest. By retrospect and preparation the playwright keeps his action moving—the great virtue of dynamic or progressive structure—with the strongest continuity. Further, while he concerns himself with the matter of the present scene, he can add force and meaning to what has gone before, and pile them up for what is to come after, so that, in effect, he is building up several (perhaps widely separated) parts of his play at once. This can be of great value in what I will call the harmonic structure: the structure which by parallel, contrast, or cross-reference, independent perhaps of the cause-and-effect connections of the progressive action, makes us compare one passage or person of the play with another, and so find an enriched significance in both. As for immediate interest, that is indispensable: 'What one requires in the theatre', wrote William Archer to Gilbert Murray, 'is, so to speak, a certain pressure of pleasurable sensation to the square inch, or rather to the minute'; and 'pleasurable' being taken in the right sense, this puts it admirably.

With the first entry and speech of our illustrative scene, there is interest in the appearance of three fresh persons, and some tension: Antipholus the alien is warned that he is in danger of the fate which overtook Egeon in the scene before; a fate summarized in the natural course of the warning. This retrospect, and parallel of situation, link the opening of the main action and that of the Egeon action within which it is to be framed. The link is strengthened by reference to three themes already started in the Egeon episode: risk (and in particular the hazards of Ephesus), wealth and time. Egeon, Antipholus is told:

... not being able to buy out his life
According to the statute of the town
Dies ere the weary sun set in the west.

Since these themes will now be developed throughout the main action, the references to them are preparatory no less than retrospective. The theme of moneyed wealth is emphasized by stage-'business': the merchant hands back to Antipholus

... your money that I had to keep,

and Antipholus passes it on to his Dromio. The bag of money is to

furnish one of the two subjects of the first comic misunderstanding, due to occur later in the scene, and therefore is implanted visually on the audience's mind beforehand; moreover, it will form a parallel with the gold chain and the purse, other concrete visible properties which carry on the theme and become foci of similar cross-purposes in subsequent Acts. The second subject of the imminent misunderstanding, the summons to dinner by the Ephesian Dromio, is also prepared, and the time-theme touched, in Antipholus' observation:

Within this hour it will be dinner-time.

Another chief theme of the play is introduced when he is warned to conceal his Syracusan origin; for this concerns his identity. Again, when he bids Dromio depart with the money, Dromio's exit lines:

Many a man would take you at your word,
And go indeed, having so good a mean,

foreshadow the suspicion that his master will shortly entertain, while preparing us to recognize it as groundless, a comic error. The rendezvous arranged, at the Centaur, leads to the reunion of master and servant in II. ii.

Dromio's jesting exit ends the first *scène*. It is Shakespeare's cue for underlining the promise of comedy: the note of tension at the start has now passed into the background. It is the cue also for Antipholus' direct comment upon Dromio's character, which adds to what has been gathered of his own and of the relations between the two of them. The audience's present curiosity about them is gratified, and its appetite whetted, both together; for the promise of comedy is contained in the informative comment itself:

A trusty villain, sir, that very oft,
When I am dull with care and melancholy,
Lightens my humour with his merry jests,

jest, it is clear, which are very timely. Antipholus' experience of Dromio as a jester is needed to explain his coming assumption that the invitation to dinner is his servant's joke, and his slowly mounting surprise and anger when it is persisted in out of season. The rendezvous with the merchant, 'at five-o'clock', like that arranged in *scène* 1 with Dromio, helps to establish the theme of timing, and the motifs of timely or untimely meetings or failures to meet. It points forward, moreover, to the hour (cp. V. i. 118) so fateful for Egeon, the hour (though we do not

yet know this) of the *dénouement*; somewhat as the mention of dinner-time in *scène* 1 began to make ready for the dinner episode (III. i), the play's central pivot.

The *scènes* of three, then two persons, are succeeded by Antipholus' first soliloquy. Here and in the two remaining *scènes*, the immediate interest for the audience strengthens. From the point of view of comedy and the intrigue, *scène* 4, the encounter with the wrong Dromio, is the climax of the whole scene. It is flanked, in the ABA form so frequent in Shakespeare, by Antipholus' soliloquies, which are the imaginative climaxes, and, together with the moment when he strikes (the Ephesian) Dromio, the emotional climaxes too, though there is contrast between his emotion as an exasperated and as a 'melancholy' imaginative man. From the imaginative, introspective man he is, soliloquies (his brother has none) come naturally; his allusion to his 'care and melancholy' has prepared the way for them.

The first of them explains both his special occasion of 'care', and his arrival, contributing by a single stroke to the logic at once of the character and of the plot. He has an aim, fruitlessly pursued: 'to find a mother and a brother'. It is a dull member of the audience who does not refer this back to Egeon's retrospect (narrating much of the dramatist's 'fable', prior to the part enacted), and so conjecture who Antipholus must be. The audience is held, too, by the revelation of feeling. Antipholus' emotional reflections spring from the farewells just exchanged at the end of *scène* 2: 'I will go lose myself', he said, and was commended by the Merchant to his 'own content'. This is the phrase which prompts his soliloquy, where he laments that what would content him is precisely what he cannot get. The idea of his 'losing himself' is taken up in a profound sense, and couched in a fine image commensurate with its thematic importance. The theme of identity is here linked with those of relationship (dislocated or re-established), and of risk. To seek reunion with the lost members of the family, Antipholus is risking his identity; yet he must do so, for only if the full relationship is restored can he find content. And then, hints the image of one water-drop seeking another, the present individual identity will be lost, or transformed, in another way. It is to claim a sinking of identity in the marriage-relation, with the emergence of a new identity, where each is also the other, that Adriana uses the closely similar image in II. ii. In the play's harmonic structure, while this soliloquy is thus recalled at that point, in its own place it recalls the situation of Egeon, who on virtually the same quest as Antipholus, has so risked his mortal identity that it is forfeit to the

executioner. Antipholus' fear that he is losing himself is full of comic irony. No sooner has he expressed it, than, with the entry of his brother's Dromio, he begins to be the victim of the successive mistakes of identity to which his words are designed by Shakespeare as a prelude, and in the course of which he will come to wonder whether he is beside himself, and has lost himself indeed. The often uproarious comedy arising from these and the other Errors is not my immediate subject; and as regards the *scène* of cross-purposes, I shall make only a few observations, concerned with themes and structure. In the progressive structure of the play, it has two main functions. First, it interests us in Adriana, ready for her entrance in the next Scene (II. i), and leads to her personal summoning of the alien Antipholus to dinner (II. ii). Second, it produces the comic dislocation of relationship between him and his own Dromio when they meet in II. ii and Dromio denies the offences he is supposed to have committed here. The present failure of communication and relationship between Antipholus and the other Dromio, resulting from the mistake of identities, is made visible, audible, and tangible by 'business': the blow. Like the theme of relationship, the mistiming theme is brought into close connection with that of mistaken identity. Dromio's impatient mistress, when by strike of clock it was twelve, has 'made it one' upon his cheek; and for him Antipholus is her husband, his master, late for dinner, while for Antipholus Dromio is his servant, returned too soon, and obstinate in ill-timed jest. By Dromio's entrance are initiated the enigmas that beset the characters, and Antipholus is given an aptly enigmatic comment upon it:

Here comes the almanack of my true date.

The new arrival has the appearance of his Dromio, who constitutes a record of his span from the time of their simultaneous nativities; but by a comic irony, so does the Dromio who has really entered: the comment fits both the false inference from appearance, and the reality itself. Its enigmatic nature conceals, so one finds from the final speech of the Abbess after the *dénouement* (V. i. 401-7) a further meaning: what approaches with this Dromio is the occasion which will secure Antipholus his true identity through a new date of birth—his true birth into the restored family relationship. That is the metaphor the Abbess employs.

It is by mistaking appearance for reality that Antipholus and his brother's Dromio misidentify one another. The threat to the very self involved in the confusion of appearance and reality is the thought most

vividly conveyed in Antipholus' second soliloquy. The soliloquy rounds off the scene, not without certain resemblances to the beginning. Then, the theme of moneyed wealth was given prominence; and there was tension because the Ephesian law spelled danger to Antipholus' goods or life. Now, he is keenly anxious about his money; indeed, that is the motive for his final exit to seek Dromio at the Centaur. And tension rises again with his anxiety; but still more with the profoundly disturbing fears into which it merges, of worse perils than the law's in Ephesus, suggested by its repute as a place of illusions and shape-shifting, of jugglers that deceive the eye, of mountebanks and disguised cheaters, of

Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind:
Soul-killing witches that deform the body.

The lines seize the imagination of the audience at the deep level where the ancient dread of losing the self or soul is very much alive. They are highly characteristic of the imaginative Antipholus, develop the idea in his first soliloquy that his self is at hazard, and set the pattern for his interpretations of the strange experiences that befall him henceforward. At present his sense of those reputed perils of Ephesus, awakened by what seems the extraordinary behaviour of Dromio, produces the provisional resolve:

If it prove so, I will be gone the sooner;

the first sign of the recurrent danger that he will depart before recognition and family reunion, with the consequent saving of Egeon's life, can come about. His fears are not cowardice; such a view of them has been guarded against in *scènes* 1 and 2, where despite the warning of Egeon's fate, he was determined to explore the town. The spirit he showed there prepares us for his acceptance of what will seem to him the mysterious adventure offered him by Adriana and Luciana: in spite of his forebodings now, for a time he will be ready to believe that the mystifications and transmutations of Ephesus may not be all malevolent.

Every passage in our illustrative scene has thus its functions both in the scene itself, and in the wider dynamic, harmonic, thematic, comic structure of the play. Besides this close, economical texture, there are of course other proofs of Shakespeare's early command of construction in the dramatic medium. He constructs in terms of theatre: he knows, for instance, the value of business and of devices and episodes which belong peculiarly to the stage. A famous example is the serenade scene in *Two Gentlemen*, with its music, its distancing of Sylvia at her window, and its eavesdroppers—the Host appreciative or drowsing to sleep, Julia

(in male costume) painfully intent. In *The Comedy of Errors*, the gold chain seen, the blows seen and heard, make double the effect they would in narrative. The asides or semi-asides of the alien Antipholus and Dromio in II. ii, by a sound use of dramatic convention, mark the dichotomy between their mental worlds and that of Adriana and Luciana with whom they are in converse. The hilarious and crucial episode of the rightful husband and his party shut out from dinner depends for its full impact upon the stage-arrangement: the parties in altercation are both plainly visible to the audience though not to each other. But the supreme power manifest in Shakespeare's art of dramatic construction is the combinative power well indicated by Hardin Craig, who writes of 'his unequalled [skill] in fitting parts together so that they [reinforce] one another', and notes that in working upon materials which often gave him much of his fable ready-made, his 'originality seems to have consisted in the selection of great significant patterns'. Of such patterns and such combining of parts, *The Shrew*, among the first four comedies, offers in the manifold relationships between its Induction and the main play perhaps the finest illustration.

In *The Comedy of Errors*, the combinative power is exercised in drawing upon diverse sources to compose a play of diverse yet co-operating strands and tones, a play which ranges from the averted-tragical, in prologue and *dénouement*, to low comedy, as in the drubbings and the account of Luce; while the middle comedy of the Antipholi provides its central substance. The adventures of the alien Antipholus, particularly his falling in love with Luciana, have emotional chords that relate them to the tone of the Egeon story; the marital conflict of Antipholus the husband and his Adriana is bourgeois comedy, informed by intellectual and emotional discussion. Both Antipholi, through the association of master and man, take part with the Dromios in the lower comedy, which besides knockabout farce includes burlesque of academical logic and rhetoric, a comic parallel to the more serious concern with ideas at other levels of the action.

The play appealed at once to the taste for neo-Plautine intrigue comedy, and to what may be regarded as the four great interests traditionally supplied by romance. It is based on Plautus' *Menaechmi*. There Shakespeare found twin brothers, the traveller in search of the denizen, lost since childhood. The traveller is mistaken for his brother by all the important characters in turn, except the doctor, and his own servant, who once mistakes the brother for him. The second great source of complications is likewise the same as in Shakespeare: when characters have

met the twin they do not know, and taken him for the one they do, they then meet the one they really do know, and debit or credit him with what in fact took place between them and the other. Such a misunderstanding occurs once between the traveller and his servant; and it is through errors of this kind that the denizen is brought into trouble. From his parasite (incensed at the traveller) his wife learns that he has given her cloak to a courtesan he frequents; she turns him out of doors to recover it. The courtesan has entrusted the cloak and her own gold chain to his twin, whom by mistake for him she has had to dinner; and shuts him out when he denies having received them. At the climax just before the final recognition, the traveller, accused of marital injustice by the wife and her father, replies, as they think, like a madman: a doctor is summoned, and catechizes the real husband, who is shortly seized at his orders. Here are the originals of the Antipholi, Adriana, the Courtesan, Dr. Pinch, and the alien Dromio. The other Dromio, as the servant who begins the train of errors by bringing to the wrong twin the summons to dinner afterwards seconded by his mistress, to that extent plays the same part as the courtesan's cook in Plautus. The courtesan has a maid as well as a cook; Adriana has Luce as well as a Dromio. There are minor hints in the dialogue for the personage of the goldsmith, the rope's end, and the alien twin's anxiety about the money handed for safe keeping to his servant. The father reproves the supposed husband for his treatment of the wife, as Luciana does in Shakespeare; but he first reproved the wife, like Luciana again (and like the Abbess later). Shakespeare has gone far to exonerate the husband. For the cloak, the wife's property, the gold chain is substituted as a gift only promised her (its place in the courtesan's complaints is supplied by her ring); and he does not propose to bestow it upon the courtesan until provoked by his wife's barring him out, and that in the face of the guests he had invited. Moreover, he has not frequented the courtesan; and his visit now is suggested by his wife's baseless jealousy of her. Had the wife barred out *this* husband because of her sense of grievance, it would have been hard to believe in her love of him, which is vital to Shakespeare's play; but she does not—she acts under a delusion, without recognizing him.

Even within the ambit of intrigue comedy, the *Menaechmi* did not furnish enough for Shakespeare. He shared the Renaissance and English desire for 'copy' or copiousness, and he required an action long enough for the Elizabethan stage. Accordingly, he crossed what he took from the *Menaechmi* with the celebrated situation from Plautus' *Amphitruo*. There, the husband is shut out while Jupiter in his likeness seduces his

wife within; the husband's slave, too, Sosia, is impersonated and excluded by Jupiter's henchman, Mercury. The consequences of the cross have been analysed closely by T. W. Baldwin. We may note that it gives Shakespeare one of his far-reaching changes from the plot of the *Menaechmi*, the matching of the twin masters by twin servants; goes with a second, the transfer of the dinner from the courtesan's to the wife's, and helps to prompt a third, the invention of Luciana. With love and marriage conceived in the human terms they are in Shakespeare's comedy, a seduced Adriana would be tragic not comic; chaste, like Lucrece, in mind but not in body. The supposed husband therefore must be in no serious danger of succumbing to her importunities, and partly for this reason, partly for the sake of love-interest and comic effect, Luciana is introduced to be the object of his devout and legitimate passion, that will seem to her and her sister doubly illegitimate. Naturally Shakespeare's changes interlock: thus, as opposite number to the alien servant, the second servant now belongs to the husband and wife not to the courtesan, and so it is from the wife he brings his summons. Since there is no seduction, the summons from the wife is requisite to bring the supposed husband to her house. Above all, the shutting-out of the real husband by the wife in *Menaechmi*, is transformed into the much stronger situation derived from *Amphitruo*, and the shutting-out by the courtesan is dropped: hence yet again it is at the wife's, as part of the strong situation there, that the dinner needs to be located. The shift contributes, in keeping with Shakespeare's treatment of the marital conflict and of love, to lay emphasis on the wife, the husband, and the true lover at the centre, and to make the courtesan's part no less subordinate than the goldsmith's, which Shakespeare invents. The shift also obviates the necessity for the husband to order the dinner beforehand, as he does in Act I of *Menaechmi*, where the errors do not begin till Act II. Except for a hint of provocation offered by the wife, and her desire to oversee the husband's comings and goings, Shakespeare jettisons this first Act, getting the errors started in the first scene of his main action with Dromio of Ephesus' mistake, which likewise ensures that Dromio's master will be involved more quickly than the denizen in Plautus. Finally, to have two pairs of twins instead of one, multiplies and makes more complex the errors available for plot and comedy.

Among the more important neo-Plautine or neo-Terentian features of the play is its observance of the unity of time: Shakespeare advertises the limit of a few hours within which his action is to be, and is, compressed. Other such features are the unity of place, and the setting, with its three

houses—and (as Peter Alexander points out) the Harbour imagined 'off' on the one side, the Mart or Town on the other: a conception originally from Athens, where it corresponded with fact. The first scene performs the function of a classical prologue: there is Seneca as well as Plautus in its ancestry. The Terentian five-act structure expounded by T. W. Baldwin we shall notice shortly. The contrasts of prose and various sorts of verse, including rhyme, to suit the changing character of the episodes, is compared by Cornelia Coulter to the similar use of lyric measures and the lower-toned senarii in Latin comedy. For other similarities, her article should be consulted; but one has to bear in mind that one and the same feature commonly has antecedents in more than one tradition. Shakespeare's comic servants inherit from Cain's Garcio and the rest in the Miracle Cycles, and from the native Vice, as well as from the Latin Servus, and Lyly's pert lads like the Dromio in *Mother Bombie*. The love of balance seen in the doubling of the twins and the invention of a sister and confidante for Adriana, a prospective wife for the bachelor Antipholus—if we are to seek the sources of it further than in Shakespeare's own artistic sense—is not to be traced only to Terence, Plautus and Lyly: balanced grouping of personages is characteristic of Moralities and Tudor Interludes. Men of the Renaissance read Latin comedy in the light of their own predilections, formed to a considerable extent by the tradition that had come down from medieval romances and had branched into the novelle. Consequently, as Madeleine Doran has shown, they gave to the motifs of recognition, shipwreck, long-lost children and the like, when they met them in Terence and Plautus, far more than the value they had originally had there as romance. To a lesser degree, what love-interest Terence in particular afforded was similarly magnified.

Hence, when through his neo-Plautine warp Shakespeare ran a weft dyed in colours of romance, he was making no extreme change from the Latin genre as then frequently understood. Rather, he was overgoing Plautus, and Terence, on their supposed romantic side, as well as on that of comic intrigue. For this purpose, and for 'copiousness', he drew on additional sources. The leading interests of romance—as one might exemplify from Arthurian romances, from *The Squire's Tale*, or, coming to the period of our play, from the romance aspects of *Arcadia* and *The Faerie Queene*—were adventure; marvel, especially enchantment; the high sentiment of love; and *sens*, the implications brought out in the *matière*, the meaning the reader takes away with him, as a result of the author's treatment. Shakespeare develops into an adventure-story, that of Egeon, the successful quest for the long-lost child which in *Menaechmi*

is hardly more than a presupposition of the plot. For the initial peril demanded by a plot of this kind, he provides by translating from hoax into fact the situation of the Sienese merchant in Gascoigne's *Supposes*, where it was already part of a drama of mistaken identities; and by heightening it from a potential threat to goods into a provisional sentence of death. The shipwreck and intervention of piratical fishermen, whereby, Egeon narrates, the family was first divided, have a probable source in Greene's *Menaphon*, and form a link with the source of the happy ending, the adventures of Apollonius of Tyre, related by Gower and Twine. After vicissitudes including shipwreck, succour from a fisherman, loss of his wife at sea, and the kidnapping of his daughter by pirates, Apollonius' reunion with his family is completed at Ephesus. There he discovers his wife in the Priestess of Diana's Temple, as the Abbess is discovered to be Egeon's. The interest of adventure is not confined to the *dénouement* and the opening scene; through the alien Antipholus it is carried into the main action. To him it seems that he has a series of adventures with the supernatural. His thoughts and feelings about them, like the providential coincidences that have brought all the members of the family to Ephesus, speak to our sense of marvel. His illusion of supernatural menace in these experiences is set against the real peril of Egeon, and against the truth of his love, even though his love-adventure, which brings the loftiest of love-sentiment into the comedy, seems to him supernatural and at least equivocally perilous too. In the idea of the town as a home of supernatural delusion, Shakespeare is again combining sources. The Epidamnum of *Menaechmi* (II. i) is notorious for cheats. The denizen's house there is associated by Shakespeare with Amphitruo's, a scene of supernatural shape-shifting. Epidamnum itself he has changed to Ephesus, no doubt as the site of Diana's Temple in the Apollonius story, which becomes his Abbey. Diana of the Ephesians inevitably recalls Acts XIX, whence Shakespeare would remember, besides the uproar on her account, the references to curious (that is, black) arts practised in Ephesus, and to the exorcists, with whom Dr. Pinch (founded on the Medicus in *Menaechmi*) has something in common. The Ephesians are warned against supernatural foes in St. Paul's Epistle, which also exhorts them, Geoffrey Bullough reminds us, to domestic unity, dwelling on the right relationships of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. With the father's rebuke to the wife in *Menaechmi*, and the long tradition of marital debate in mediaeval and Tudor literature, it thus contributed, no doubt, to the *sens* of the play.

To consider the *sens* is to consider the themes. However they are deepened and interconnected by Shakespeare's treatment, they are not recondite: for the audience, they are the general ideas arising most naturally from the motives and development of the plot, and the response of the characters. The play begins and ends with relationship: a family torn asunder and reunited. Relationship is the motive that has brought Egeon, and the alien Antipholus and Dromio, to the hazards of Ephesus; relationship is threatened by the tensions in the marriage of Antipholus the denizen. The chief entanglements spring from mistaken identity and mistiming:

I see we still did meet each other's man,
And I was ta'en for him, and he for me,
And thereupon these ERRORS are arose.

The twins appear the same, but in reality are different; those who meet them are led by appearance into illusion. Repeatedly one of the persons assumes that he shared an experience with another, when in reality he shared it with a different one. In consequence, the persons cease to be able to follow each other's assumptions, and become isolated in more or less private worlds. Mistakes of identity all but destroy relationship, and loss of relationship calls true identity yet more in question; the chief persons suspect themselves or are suspected of insanity, or of being possessed, surrounded, or assailed by supernatural powers—madness or demoniac possession would be the eclipse of the true self, and sorcery might overwhelm it. The alien Antipholus and Dromio fear Circean metamorphosis; Egeon, that he has been deformed out of recognition by time. Yet the hazard of metamorphosis and of the loss of present identity is also the way to fresh or restored relationship. Antipholus the bachelor desires that Luciana will transform him and create him new; and Adriana's belief that in marriage the former identities coalesce and emerge identified with each other, is true if rightly interpreted. How the possessive interpretation, not relinquished by Adriana till almost the end, is at odds with the free giving and hazarding in which the wealth and debts of love differ from those of commerce, is another central theme, well traced by J. R. Brown. Adriana's envy of a husband's status contravenes principles of order that for Shakespeare and orthodox Elizabethans extended through the whole cosmos. The status of husband, and of wife, Kate's lines in *The Shrew* imply, are related to their places in this hierarchical order:

Such duty as the subject owes the prince
Even such a woman oweth to her husband.

Adriana comes to style her husband lord, and they each lay their case, as each has come to see it, before the Duke, reminding themselves and him that the match was first made by his authority. By this point, disorder from the various disruptions of relationship has gone so far in the community, that only the appeals for justice addressed to the Abbess and to him, God's viceroys spiritual and temporal, are capable, the time now being ripe, of leading to a solution.

Not only are the themes organically developed in the action; they are organically connected in themselves. At the centre is relationship: relationship between human beings, depending on their right relationship to truth and universal law: to the cosmic reality behind appearance, and the cosmic order. Trust in mere appearance results in illusion and mistakes of identity, thus dislocating relationship, and so disrupting order: blind conflict and disorder are inevitable when men misconceive true identity and become isolated in private worlds. Besides illusion, there are other factors of disorder: revolt against a wife's place in the cosmic hierarchy is the original source of discord in Adriana's marriage: order is broken, too, by everything untimely. As Ovid's *Tempus edax rerum*, time opposes mutability to the creative cosmic order. By that mutability, identity itself may be threatened: '*Nec species sua cuique manet . . .*' —the link of time-theme and appearance-theme is present in Ovid, and particularly clear in the apostrophe to Time wrung from Egeon when he finds himself unrecognized. Here, and in the dread of Circean transformation into beasts, metamorphosis is seen in its hostile aspect; but, as we have observed, it can also transform for the better: time, too, when it is ripe, brings a new order. Till then, patience would mitigate disorder, which cannot be ended till the claims for justice, distorted by the claimants' assumption that their private worlds are real, are laid before those who in the hierarchy of order are founts of justice upon earth. More than justice is needed: without mercy, the godly prince is not himself; and amid the demonstrations of love's wealth, lacking which there would be little of the genial warmth that glows in the conclusion, Solinus is inspired to what he had declared impossible, and freely remits the debt Egeon owes the law. In this organic structure, of the two themes which next to relationship are the most inclusive, the first, cosmic order, presides in Shakespeare's early Histories; its importance in his drama is well recognized, and the importance of the second, appearance and reality, is becoming so. The first is a familiar part of 'the Elizabethan world-picture'; the second, presumably, has affiliations with Renaissance neo-Platonism.

The themes are given prominence in several ways. They are voiced by the speakers, who often relate one theme to another: the examples in our analysis of I. ii are characteristic. The dominant imagery, of man as beast, reflects the ideas of illusory appearance and malign metamorphosis; above all, it mirrors the threats to identity and to status in the cosmic order. Appropriately, it stops on the brink of the *dénouement*, with the Duke's explicit formulation:

I think you all have drunk of Circe's cup.

Thematic, likewise, are the two images of the water-drop, its identity lost for relationship's sake. The whole harmonic structure, of which the correspondence of images forms part, is a vehicle of the themes. How generosity and two degrees of possessiveness in love are defined by juxtaposition of *scènes* in III. ii, with reference back to Adriana's attitude in Act II, has been shown by J. R. Brown. The supreme instance is the parallel between the 'gossips' feast' to which everyone is going at the end, and the dinner from which the husband and his guests were shut out. The gossips' or baptismal feast affirms relationship and identity: the kin are united, the Duke is patron, all are friends and godparents, witnesses to the identities now truly established and christened into the family and the community; long travail is rewarded, and increase (the progressive aspect of cosmic order) which, despite the double birth of twins, was mocked by the intervention of mutable fortune, is now truly realized. It is not only as a sensational error of identity that the exclusion from dinner contrasts with this: balked or broken feasts (G. Wilson Knight has made us aware) are recurrent symbols in Shakespeare of the breakdown of human fellowship and its pieties. Both this motif, and the extravagant comedy of the barring-out, are worked up by the burlesque Lylyan or Erasmian colloquy on whether good cheer or welcome makes the feast. The burlesque 'turns' for the clowns belong to the harmonic structure in much the same way. The theme of time's depredations, for instance, is the text of the mock disputation on Time and Hair. In IV. ii, iii, the clown's interlocutors are bamboozled by the spate of mock rhetorical similitudes in which he drowns the identity of his subject, the Sergeant, who is verbally transmogrified into devil, wolf, perverse hound, evil angel and so forth; and whose function, arrest for debt (to be compared with the love-claims of Adriana) is the pith of the jests. To these themes, thus linked, of debt, identity, metamorphosis, and supernatural malice, the further comic fancy of debtor Time turning

back an hour when he meets with a Sergeant, links those of untimeliness and reversal of cosmic order.

The *Comedy* appeals first and foremost to laughter, as is obvious at any performance. I have dwelt on its serious themes and strands of romance, because it is these that student and producer are prone to discount. In his famous Stratford production (1939), Komisarjevsky geyed Egeon, Emilia, and the wooing scene: he could not present them 'straight' and still keep them in key with the rest, which he was evidently determined to exploit for all it was worth as farce, thereby turning Shakespeare's comedy with its several finely-balanced tones into his own scintillating single-toned vaudeville. Among dramas of recognition, the *Comedy* is not a superior *Supposes*, without much in it (that signifies) beyond lively intrigue and farcical situations. On the contrary, it resembles the *Ion* and *The Confidential Clerk* in matching a mystification about identity, at the level of intrigue, with an exploration of serious issues appropriate to such a plot. Less than half the total number of lines (some 750, I estimate, out of some 1750) are mainly devoted to the essentials of the intrigue comedy. About 300 are elaborations of comic rhetoric; the remainder develop the romance interests, and, with the comic rhetoric, point the themes. Even so rough a criterion confirms that the play is not to be regarded as a farcical intrigue-comedy and little more.

To recognize this is not to undervalue the intrigue, so brilliantly contrived to make the most of all the opportunities for comic error. The progressive action, in which the intrigue is one factor, develops the comedy and themes of the play along with the fortunes of its persons; and is organized no less firmly on the large scale than the single scenes are on the small. So far as the plot is concerned, this organization corresponds, T. W. Baldwin has shown, to the five-act structure Renaissance and earlier critics found in Terence; particularly the form found in the *Andria*. How far it depends upon neo-classical theory is perhaps a question: among the features Baldwin indicates, those of most consequence for dramatic effect can be paralleled in a mediaeval drama like *The Castle of Perseverance*, and to a playwright well-endowed with structural sense might seem natural, theory or no theory, in plays with a central crisis and a final solution. However this may be, the comedy begins *in medias res*, with the partial exposition of what has happened already, and the immediate occasions of the subsidiary and main actions: the suspended sentence on Egeon and the summons to the wrong Antipholus. Act II completes the exposition and *protasis* by introducing the sisters and their motivation, especially Adriana's; and ends, when the

same Antipholus accedes to her summons, with the beginning of the *epitasis* or entanglement proper. This leads to the central crisis in III. i: locked out, the husband is brought into the entanglement, and narrowly fails to meet his twin: despite the Dromios' scolding-match, recognition is missed. By the last words of Act IV, with the firm resolve of the alien to depart, there is imminent danger it will be missed for ever; and there follows in the supposed madness of the twins and the expiration of Egeon's respite, the climax of distresses that precipitates the *dénouement*. There, meeting and recognition are combined with the completion and correction of Egeon's retrospect:

Why here begins his morning story right.

The development of the action is supported by the use made of the stage-set. Acts II and III are focused upon the Phoenix, scene of the central crisis. Act IV brings into play the second *domus*, the Porpentine, and in accord with the fast-extending complications has no one focal point: the action is related by turns to the Phoenix, the Porpentine, and neither. The third *domus*, the Abbey, is kept in reserve as the appropriate focus for the *dénouement*. Dynamic progress is strongly felt in the mounting violence, from the first mere thwack to the drawing of swords, thrashing with a rope's end, overpowering of 'madmen', and elaborate (narrated) vengeance upon Pinch; in the spreading of error beyond the family to courtesan, goldsmith, and merchant, until the whole town, at least in Adriana's fevered fancy, seems involved; and in the darkening conviction of the imaginative Antipholus that his supernatural experiences are from the devil. With this explanation, natural to his melancholy temperament, he has positively encased himself in error, for it is as coherent as it is fallacious. In like fashion his choleric brother comes to attribute all his sufferings to a conspiracy instigated by his wife: both the Antipholi reach the verge of persecution-mania. Since Adriana also is given her point of view, which alters before the end, one can say of the three main persons that although they do not develop in the sense of being felt to change in character as a result of the action, their attitudes of mind develop, so that each is felt to have an inner self. That is, they are not wholly flat characters, such as might be fitting protagonists of pure farce. They are simple, but have just enough depth for the play, which Shakespeare, as we have seen, has deepened considerably beyond the expected limitations of neo-classical comedy.

Even so, in depth and scope he was, of course, far to surpass it. None the less, it is in its own kind an extraordinarily finished work. The kind

being one that not even Shakespeare could extend beyond somewhat narrow limits, a less tight form, exemplified in *Two Gentlemen*, held more promise of *Twelfth Night*. Yet in recognizing this, one ought also to recognize how much, in the *Comedy*, he has in fact found room for. Like the other early plays, it will always be judged by two standards. One, quite properly, is the standard set later by Shakespeare himself. But the play should also be appreciated for what it is in its own right: still actable as a hilarious yet balanced comedy, more pregnant than has perhaps been supposed with Shakespearian ideas.

Note

First Editions. A 'bad' quarto (1594) and a 'bad' octavo (1595) bear, respectively, the titles: 'The first part of the Contention betwixt the two famous Houses of Yorke and Lancaster . . . with the notable Rebellion of Jacke Cade: and the Duke of Yorke's first claime unto the Crowne' and 'The true Tragedie of Richard Duke of Yorke, and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt, with the whole contention betweene the two Houses Lancaster and Yorke, as it was sundrie times enacted by the Right Honourable the Earle of Pembroke his Servants'. As Greg remarks in *The Shakespeare First Folio* (1955) 'the two parts of *The Contention between the Houses of York and Lancaster*' are too closely connected to have different histories, though 'their relation to 2 and 3 *Henry VI* has been a standing problem of Shakespearian criticism'; 1, 2 and 3 *Henry VI* are Folio (1623) texts.

Modern Editions. The authoritative modern edition of 1, 2 and 3 *Henry VI* is the New Cambridge Shakespeare, edited by J. Dover Wilson (3 vols., 1952), who has strong views on the authorship question. There is a New Arden Edition of 2 *Henry VI* (1956) edited by A. S. Cairncross with a useful and comprehensive introduction. W. W. Greg has edited *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York, 1595* (Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles, 1958).

Scholarship and Criticism. Extracts from the substantial source material of 1, 2 and 3 *Henry VI* are provided in G. Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, Vol. III (1960). W. G. Boswell-Stone edited Holinshed's *Chronicle as Shakespeare's Holinshed* (1896); this edition is referred to in the following chapter as *Stone*, and references simply to *Hol.* are to the reprint (1808) of the 1587 edition of Holinshed. L. B. Campbell's *Shakespeare's Histories* (1947) and E. M. W. Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays* are referred to by their authors' names. J. P. Brockbank holds that Dover Wilson's arguments concerning authorship of the *Henry VI* plays can be refuted; that the plays were written in their Folio order (which is strongly suggested by the equable division of the source material); that Shakespeare was wholly responsible for them and that the oddities and incoherences in the text cannot be explained by a collaboration theory; that Robert Greene's jealousy of Shakespeare may be accounted for if we postulate his authorship of an early popular play on Henry V (perhaps the original of the *Famous Victories*); and that Shakespeare's plays of Henry VI were the first to engage closely and responsibly with chronicle material.

Stage-History. The New Cambridge Edition provides a stage-history. In *Shakespeare Survey* (1953) Sir Barry Jackson writes 'On producing *Henry VI*' with reference to his Birmingham Repertory Theatre production, by Douglas Seale, of 2 and 3 *Henry VI* in 1952. This company performed the trilogy at the Old Vic Theatre in 1953.

IV

The Frame of Disorder—‘Henry VI’

J. P. BROCKBANK



THE four plays about the Wars of the Roses were staged fully and in sequence, probably for the first time, in 1953. The experience was arresting and moving, testifying to the continuity of our own pre-occupations with those of Tudor England; here, it seemed, was yet another historical instance of anarchy owed to innocence and order won by atrocity. The three parts of *Henry VI* express the plight of individuals caught up in a cataclysmic movement of events for which responsibility is communal and historical, not personal and immediate, and they reveal the genesis out of prolonged violence of two figures representing the ultimate predicament of man as a political animal—Henry and Richard, martyr and machiavel. But one would not wish to over-stress whatever analogues there may be between the fifteenth century and the twentieth, since these might be proved quite as striking for ages other than our own. If we are now more sympathetically disposed towards Shakespeare's history plays than were the readers and audiences of seventy years ago, it is largely because we have more flexible ideas about the many possible forms that history might take. We are less dominated by the Positivist view that the truth is co-extensive with, and not merely consistent with, the facts. Contemporaries of Boswell-Stone were reluctant to take seriously a vision of the past that made free with the data for purposes they took to be simply dramatic. Following the lead of Richard Simpson, critics began to read Shakespeare's histories as documents of Tudor England, addressed primarily to contemporary problems and not fundamentally curious about the pastness of the past.¹ Now we are better placed to see them from the point of view represented, for instance, by R. G. Collingwood's *The Idea of History* and Herbert Butterfield's

¹ Richard Simpson, 'The Politics of Shakespeare's History Plays', in *Trans. New Sh. Soc.* (1874). A similar approach is made by L. B. Campbell.

Christianity and History, putting a less exclusive stress on facts, and looking harder at the myths and hypotheses used to interpret them—at ideas of providence, historical process, personal responsibility and the role of the hero. These are precisely the ideas that the playwright is fitted to explore and clarify, and Shakespeare's treatment of them is the most searching our literature has to offer. For Shakespeare was peculiarly sensitive to the subtle analogues between the world and the stage, between the shape of events and the shape of a play, between the relationship of historical process to individuals and that of the playwright to his characters. He tried from the beginning to meet the urgent and practical problem of finding dramatic forms and conventions that would express whatever coherence and order could be found in the 'plots' of chronicle history. Where narrative and play are incompatible, it may be the record and it may be the art that is defective as an image of human life, and in the plays framed from English and Roman history it is possible to trace subtle modulations of spectacle, structure and dialogue as they seek to express and elucidate the full potential of the source material. A full account would take in *The Tempest*, which is the last of Shakespeare's plays to be made out of historical documents and which has much to do with the rule of providence over the political activities of man. But from these early plays alone there is much to be learned about the vision and technique of historical drama, and these are the plays that are submitted most rigorously to the test of allegiance to historical record.

Part 1 and the Pageantry of Dissension

We might begin by taking a famous passage of Nashe as the earliest surviving critical comment on *Part 1*:²

How would it have joyed brave *Talbot* (the terror of the French) to think that after he had lyne two hundred yeares in his Tombe, hee should triumphe againe on the Stage, and have his bones new embalmed with the teares of ten thousand spectators at least, (at severall times) who, in the Tragedian that represents his person, imagine they behold him fresh bleeding.

This, primarily, is the ritual experience Shakespeare sought and won. He transposed the past of the tombs, the 'rusty brass' and the 'worm-eaten books' into living spectacle. Whatever else must be said about all three plays, they keep this quality of epic mime and with it an elemen-

² Quoted in E. K. Chambers, *Shakespeare* (1930), II, p. 188.

tary power to move large audiences. There is, too, something in Nashe's glance at those early performances that chimes with Coleridge's observation that 'in order that a drama may be properly historical, it is necessary that it should be the history of the people to whom it is addressed.'³ Shakespeare's early histories are addressed primarily to the audience's heroic sense of community, to its readiness to belong to an England represented by its court and its army, to its eagerness to enjoy a public show celebrating the continuing history of its prestige and power. This does not mean, however, that we must surrender these early plays to Joyce's remark that Shakespeare's 'pageants, the histories, sail full-bellied on a tide of Mafeking enthusiasm.' In the more mature plays of *Henry IV* the heroic sense of community will be challenged by the unheroic—by that range of allegiances which binds us less to authority and the King than to each other and to Falstaff; and the death of Hotspur is a more complicated theatrical experience than that of Talbot in Nashe's description. But the early histories too express stresses and ironies, complexities and intricate perspectives beyond the reach of the condescensions usually allowed them.

Even *Part 1* has its share. If this is a play more moving to watch than to read it is because it makes the historical facts eloquent through the language of pageantry. In a way that Nashe does not sufficiently suggest, Shakespeare exploits the poignant contrast between the past nostalgically apprehended through its monuments, and the past keenly re-enacted in the present—between the pasts 'entombed' and 'fresh-bleeding'. The effect, which testifies to the continuity of stage techniques with those of the Tournament and the civic pageant, is felt immediately in the first scene (where the mood of a cathedral entombment is mocked by the energies of the brawl), in the scene of Bedford's death (III. ii), and, most distinctly, in the death of Talbot (IV. vii). These are among the several episodes of *Henry VI* that are presented both as 'events'—as if they actually happened, the figures caught up in them alive and free, and as 'occasions'—happenings that have some symbolic significance, or are (in retrospect) 'inevitable' turning-points in the history. Thus the scene of Talbot's and Lisle's death would, if perfectly executed, present the chronicled event with convincing documentary detail, in a style befitting the occasion—the fire of English chivalry glowing brightest before it expires. The context ensures that Talbot stands at his death for the martial glory of England, and Bordeaux for the dominion of France. When the English and French nobles meet over his corpse (IV. vii), the

³ T. M. Raysor (ed.), *Coleridge's Shakespeare Criticism* (1930) I, p. 138.

retrospective, reflective mood and the instant, practical mood are sustained side by side; the first calling to mind the image of a memorial tomb seen in the remote perspective of a later time, and the second recalling us to the hard realities of the battlefield. Talbot is discovered dead with his son 'enhearsed in his arms' (IV. vii. 45), resembling a figure on a monument. Lucy's long intonement of Talbot's titles was taken at first or second hand from the inscription on Talbot's actual tomb at Rouen, and it retains its lapidary formality.⁴ Joan's lines,

Him that thou magnifiest with all these titles
Stinking and fly-blown lies here at our feet.
(IV. vii. 75)

have been mocked for their documentary impropriety (fly-blown in two minutes!) but they serve to accent the recollection in the spectacle of a Tudor tomb. Beneath the effigy of the complete man in, as it were, painted marble finery, lies the image of the rotten corpse. Joan's jeer mediates between the mutability threnody and the return to the exigencies of battle; the action gets under way again—there is a body to dispose of.

While there are other opportunities to arrest the flux of events, they are not all of this kind. The changes in pace and shifts of perspective owe as much to the chronicle as to the techniques of pageantry. The essential events and the processes and energies that shape and direct them are transmitted into the spectacle with a high sense of responsibility to the chronicle vision.

The three parts of *Henry VI* coincide with three distinct phases of the history and show that Shakespeare did what he could to tease a form for each of the plays out of the given material. The first phase of Holinshed's version⁵ reports about four hundred incidents in the French campaign, some perfunctorily and some with full solemnity. The siege of Orleans is the most conspicuous in both chronicle and play. Holinshed finds occasion to deploy his epic clichés, with the 'Englishmen' behaving themselves 'right valiantlie under the conduct of their courageous capteine' to keep and enlarge 'that which Henrie the fift had by his magnanimite & puissance atchived' (*Hol.* (1587/1808), p. 161). But the

⁴ See J. Pearce, 'An Earlier Talbot Epitaph', *Modern Language Notes* (1944), p. 327.

⁵ Pp. 585–625 in the 1587 ed. These are the 'first phase' as they supply almost all the material of *Part 1*. *Part 2* uses pp. 622–43, and *Part 3* pp. 643–93.

accent changes to sombre historical prophecy, marking the ineluctable, impersonal historical law:

But all helped not. For who can hold that which will awaie: In so much that some cities by fraudulent practises, othersome by martial prowesse were recovered by the French, to the great discouragement of the English and the appalling of their spirits; whose hope was now dashed partlie by their great losses and discomfitures (as after you shall heare) but cheeflie by the death of the late deceased Henrie their victorious king.

These opening pages license a chauvinistic battle-play framing an historical morality about the evil consequences of civil dissension. Here is Holinshed on the loss of a group of towns in 1451:

Everie daie was looking for aid, but none came. And whie? Even bicause the divelish division that reigned in England, so incombred the heads of the noble men there, that the honor of the realme was cleerelic forgotten. (*Hol.*, p. 228)

The chronicled sources of disaster are more nakedly sprung in the play: the loss of the puissant and magnanimous Henry V, the hostile stars, the hard fortunes of war, the perverse skill of the French, the steady eclipse of English chivalry with the deaths of its ageing heroes, and the corrosive quarrels and dynastic rivalries of the nobles at home. All this is manifest in the mere pantomime of *Part 1*—its force would be felt by the stone-deaf, and the routine of the play's rhetoric does much to accent and little to qualify, explore or challenge the basic simplicities of the history.

The originality of Shakespeare's accomplishment is in the shedding of all literary artifice except that which serves to express the temper and structure of the history. The first scene, for instance, establishes at once that double perspective which controls the mood of the chronicle—the sense of being close to the event together with a sense of knowing its consequences. The messenger's long review of the calamities of thirty future years, spoken in the memorial presence of the dead Henry V, is a precise dramatic expression of the narrative's parenthesis, 'as after you shall heare', of which many repetitions catch the effect of a remorseless historical law expounded by an omniscient commentator.

The symmetrical sallies and counter-sallies of the next hour of the pantomime express the fickle movement of Mars, so often moralized by Holinshed: 'thus did things waver in doubtful balance betwixt the two

nations English and French'; 'thus oftentimes varied the chance of doubtful war'; 'thus flowed the victory, sometimes on the one party, and sometimes on the other' (*Hol.*, pp. 172, 180, 192). So speaks the dramatic Dauphin:

Mars his true moving, even as in the heavens
 So in the earth, to this day is not known:
 Late did he shine upon the English side;
 Now we are victors; upon us he smiles.

(I. ii. 1)

The literary commonplace carries the chronicle moral in a naïve rhetoric transparent enough to let the raw facts tell.

It is French cunning that most often conspires with Mars to confound the English. The sniping of Salisbury at Orleans exemplifies it in an arresting stage effect ready-made in Holinshed for upper stage (tarras) performance. But as Holinshed's data is otherwise scanty and undramatic, Shakespeare amplifies it by making the French instead of the English employ 'counterfeit husbandmen' to capture Rouen (*Stone*, pp. 205-7). He betrays the chronicle detail in order to enforce one of its generalizations, for while on one occasion defending the use of fraud in lawful war, Holinshed habitually prefers honest violence—an impression strengthened in the play by the rival characterizations of Joan and Talbot. Talbot's stratagem at Auvergne (II. iii) is not subtle-witted but represents the triumph of soldierly resourcefulness over French and female craft.

While 'martiall feates, and daily skirmishes' continue in France, the play returns in four scenes to England and conveys the essential Holinshed by keeping the civil causes coincident with the military effects. Thus the dramatic concurrence of the siege of Orleans and the brawl outside the Tower of London (I. iii) directly expresses the chronicle point, 'Through dissention at home, all lost abroad' (*Hol.*, p. 228). The Gloster-Winchester feud is elaborately chronicled and patience and some skill go into Shakespeare's abbreviation of it. More important than his management of the intricate detail, however, is the strategic liberty taken with the facts in order to reduce the formal reconciliation elaborately mounted in the chronicle to a repetition of the earlier squabble, but this time concluded with a reluctant, casual handshake; the Mayor, the muttered asides, and the servants off to the surgeon's and the tavern, demote the dignity of the event (*Hol.*, p. 146).⁶ That quarrel thus becomes repre-

⁶ Here it is Bedford who formally rebukes the quarrelsome lords; the play's homely figure of the mayor is borrowed from Fabyan.

sentative of those which Holinshed ascribes to 'privie malice and inward grudge', while the dynastic rivalry assumes by contrast a status appropriate to its remoter origin and more terrible consequence.

It is in his presentation of the struggle between Lancaster and York that Shakespeare does most to transcend the temper and enrich the data of the chronicle. For in the early pages of Holinshed the struggle is nowhere clearly epitomized. There are only allusions to things that will 'hereafter more manifestlie appeare'; Henry, for instance, creates Plantagenet Duke of York, 'not foreseeing that this preferment should be his destruction, nor that his seed should of his generation be the extreame end and finall conclusion' (*Hol.*, p. 155; *Stone*, p. 223). Hence Shakespeare's invention of four scenes which, through the heraldic formality of their language, reveal the hidden keenness and permanence of the dynastic conflict. The only distinguished one—the Temple scene—is much in the manner of *Richard II*; there is the same tension between ceremony and spleen:

And that I'll prove on better men than Somerset,
Were growing time once ripen'd to my will.
(II. iv. 98)

But the note is caught again in the scene of Mortimer's death:

Here dies the dusky torch of Mortimer,
Choked with ambition of the meaner sort.
(II. v. 122)

The two scenes between Vernon and Basset (III. iv and IV. i) extend the Roses dispute from the masters to the 'servants'; but unlike those other servants who 'enter with bloody pates' (III. i. 85 SD) in pursuit of Winchester's and Gloster's causes, these conduct their quarrel according to 'the law of arms'. Ceremony and savagery are equally characteristic of chronicle taste, and in *Part 1* a full range of types of dissension is displayed by the mutations of the spectacle.

The laboured and repetitious data of the chronicle are clarified without undue simplification, with the audience required to dwell at leisure on episodes of momentous and lasting significance to the course of history. The rhythm between pattern and process is maintained; the play like the history must be both reflected upon and lived through, its moral shape apprehended but its clamour and hurly-burly wracking the nerves. But not all the chronicle material is adroitly and happily assimilated. Shakespeare's embarrassment as heir to the facts and judgments of Holinshed

is disconcertingly evident in his treatment of Joan. Holinshed presents two versions; a 'French' one, stated at length but unsympathetically, 'that this Jone (forsooth) was a damsell divine' (*Hol.*, p. 171; *Stone*, pp. 210-12); and an 'English' one, owed to Monstrelet, that she was 'a damnable sorcerer suborned by Satan' (*Hol.*, p. 172). Shakespeare pursues the chronicle by making her a manifestly evil angel of light, and as the trick of turning devil into seeming angel was a Morality Play commonplace, a technique of presentation lay to hand.⁷ But the figure was much easier to accept under the old allegoric conventions of the Morality Play that Shakespeare has all but discarded, than under the new historical documentary ones he was forging. In the early scenes the nice and nasty views about Joan are credibly distributed between the French and English,⁸ but after allowing her to voice an authentic French patriotism (winning Burgundy back to her cause) Shakespeare capitulates and throws his French Daniel to the English lions, 'Done like a Frenchman: turne and turne againe' (III. iii. 85). Shakespeare—as an examination of the detail would show—does nothing to mask and much to stress the tension between the rival images of 'Puzel' and 'Pussel', the 'high-minded strumpet' and 'the holy prophetess'. Late in the play she is made to speak a searching indictment of English hypocrisy (V. iv. 36 ff.) whose barbs are not removed by the spectacle of her converse with evil spirits.

The play ends with the patching of a false peace which holds no promise of a renewed civil order, and whose terms, born out of a silly flirtation, prefigure the final loss of France. None of the many reconciliations have any quality of goodwill, Shakespeare taking his tone again from Holinshed:

But what cause soever hindered their accord and unitie . . . certeine it is, that the onelie and principal cause was, for that the God of peace and love was not among them, without whom no discord is quenched, no knot of concord fastened, no bond of peace confirmed, no distracted minds reconciled, no true freendship mainteined. (*Hol.*, p. 183)

Suffolk's courtship of Margaret (V. iii) prefaces a false peace with a false love. To parody the absurdities of political romance Shakespeare allows Suffolk the style of a professional philanderer (one thinks of de Simier's

⁷ E.g. John Bale, *The Temptation of our Lord* (see *Works*, ed. Farmer, p. 155), and *The Conflict of Conscience* (see Hazlitt-Dodsley, Vol. VI, p. 35).

⁸ The only mocking lines spoken of Joan by the French are Alençon's at I. ii. 119; the English messenger calls her 'holy prophetess' at I. iv. 102.

wooing of Elizabeth for Alençon) and compiles for him 'A volume of enticing lines' more felicitous than Lacy's in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*; but in Greene's play the courtship is an engaging frolic merely, while here the treacheries exercised in the politics of flirtation are as sinister as they are amusing—the betrayal of trust must have evil consequences in the harsh chronicle setting.

Holinshed grieves that 'the God of peace and love' was not among the jarring nobles; but in a sense he was—in the unfortunate person of King Henry—and Shakespeare is well aware of the irony. Henry is 'too virtuous to rule the realm of England', like Elidure, the comically naïve King in the early chronicle-morality *Nobody and Somebody*,⁹ but Shakespeare makes the point unsmilingly. In the *Henry VI* plays, virtue, through varying degrees of culpable innocence, connives in its own destruction. Had they been performed in the reign of Henry VII, when the canonization of 'Holy Harry' was still a point of debate and his martyrdom a theme for civic spectacle, those who thought the King an innocent might have appealed to the first two plays, and those who took him for a saint, to the last. For as the plays advance, the paradoxical plight of moral man under the rule of historical and political processes grows more disturbing until it reaches something like a tragic solution.

Part 2: the Sacrifice of Gloster and the Dissolution of Law

There is much in *Part 2* to remind us that we are witnessing the education of a tragic playwright. Shakespeare assimilates and puts to the test theological, political and moral outlooks which, however ugly and pitiless, seem to meet with unsentimental honesty the recorded facts of human experience. *Part 1* could not end in the manner of an heroic tragedy, for the history confronted Shakespeare with the fact that society somehow survives the deaths of its heroes and the conditions for its survival must go on being renewed—a point that tells again in *Julius Caesar*. *Part 1* concludes by establishing the minimal and provisional terms of survival—the death of Joan and the marriage bargain, but the historical facts allow no revival in *Part 2* of the austere, soldierly virtues that supply the moral positives of the first part—Talbot will be displaced by Gloster.

From one point of view the second and third plays share the same structural frame, supplied by Holinshed in passages such as this:

⁹ This play (edited by Richard Simpson for the Shakespeare Society) treats the ups and downs of Elidure's reign with challenging irreverence. The extant edition is of 1606, but the original may antedate *Henry VI*.

But most of all it would seeme, that God was displeased with this marriage: for after the confirmation thereof, the kings freends fell from him, both in England and in France, the lords of his realme fell at division, and the commons rebelled in such sort, that finallie after manie fields foughten, and manie thousands of men slaine, the king at length was deposed, and his sonne killed, and this queene sent home againe, with as much miserie and sorrow as she was received with pompe and triumphe: such is the instabilitie of worldlie felicitie, and so wavering is false flattering fortune. Which mutation and change of the better for the worse could not but nettle and sting hir with pensiveness, yea and any other person whatsoever, that having beene in good estate, falleth into the contrarie. (*Hol.*, p. 208)

In their unabashed drift from God's displeasure to the waverings of fortune Holinshed's pieties are characteristic of chronicle theology. The subtler medieval distinctions between the will of God and the waywardness of Fortune are lost, but the dominant ideas remain, and they are crucial to an understanding of Shakespeare's tetralogy, and more particularly, of the role of Queen Margaret. The chronicle is enlisting Old Testament theology to rationalize the processes of history: when the land is sinful, God's judgment recoils upon it, and evil must be atoned by blood sacrifice. Shakespeare makes fullest use of Margaret to exemplify this moral order; through the span of the plays she is in turn its agent, victim and oracle. It is in *Richard III* that Shakespeare's ironic questioning of the chronicle providence is most telling, when Margaret, disengaged from the action but brought to the court in the teeth of historical fact, is made the malignant prophetess of God's displeasure, and Clarence is allowed to protest with humane eloquence against the theology of his murderers (I. iv. 171-265). In the *Henry VI* plays the chronicle theology is exposed to a different kind of test—that of the chronicle's own political ideology.

The chronicles were more ready to accept the tragic-religious solution of social disorder as a past and finished process than as an omnipresent law. They wrote in a tradition which had quietly assimilated the mundane, realistic attitudes for which Machiavelli was to become the most persuasive apologist; and whenever they write with an eye on the prospect of Tudor security, they show themselves sympathetic to the 'machievellian' solution—stability imposed by strong authority. Hence their strictures on the 'overmuch mildness' of a Henry found 'too soft for governor of a kingdom', and hence the coolness with which they recognize the peace and prosperity of the later part of Edward IV's

reign,¹⁰ which owed more to the King's military ability and popularity (however limited) with nobility and commons, than to his integrity as Rightful King and Servant of God. Shakespeare's most decisive criticism of the chronicle is his virtual suppression of the temporary recovery under Edward, thus making his moral of peace at the end of *Richard III* distinctly less 'machievellian' than it appears in Holinshed—peace returns by God's ordinance only when the forces of evil are quite expended. The kind of dramatic thinking about history that makes Shakespeare's plays does not prove hospitable to the kind of uncritical good sense that allows the chroniclers to shift from one scale of values to another. In *Henry VI* the sacrificial idea, which makes catastrophe a consequence of sin, is sharply challenged by the 'machievellian' idea that makes it a consequence of weakness.

While this range of problems is entertained in *Part 2* about the plight of the King himself, the unique form of the play is yielded by the martyrdom of Gloster. The play climbs to one crisis—a central point in the third act where the killing of Gloster calls out the strongest statement of the moral-political positives; and it falls to a second—where the battle of St. Albans occasions the most powerful poetry of negation.

It opens with a 'Flourish of Trumpets: Then Hoboyes' announcing Margaret with chronicled 'pompe and triumph', but almost at once, as he lets the paper fall and addresses his 'peroration with such circumstance' to the assembled peers, it is Gloster who dominates the theatre, assuming his representative and symbolic role. Like Gaunt in *Richard II*, he recollects the chivalry of the past and epitomizes a political wisdom alienated in the dramatic 'present'. But there is none of the spiritual and physical malaise that complicates the figure of Gaunt, no sterility or decay. Gaunt's prophecy is the 'ague's privilege'—his approaching death calls out his honesty; but Gloster is vigorous and defiant, and his honesty brings about his death. If the Gaunt study is the more penetrating exploration of the relation of moral strength to political impotence, this version of Gloster is the shrewder study of heroic virtue.

Holinshed says that Gloster's praise should be undertaken by writers of 'large discourse', and notes (as he takes over the Tudor legend) the 'ornaments of his mind', his 'feats of chivalry', 'gravity in counsell' and 'soundness of policy' (*Hol.*, p. 211; *Stone*, pp. 250, 265). Together with his magnanimity Holinshed finds a love of the commons and a devotion

¹⁰ Hall's titles pass from the 'troublesome season' of Henry VI to the 'prosperous reign' of Edward IV. Shakespeare's judgment of Edward is harsher than that of any of the chroniclers.

to the public good. With so strong a lead from the chronicle Shakespeare makes Gloster's qualities both personal and symbolic. In the first two acts he comes to stand for the rule of law and for the integrity of nobility and commons—the conditions of social order that cease to prevail the moment he is murdered. Holinshed is outspoken about the destruction of the rule of law: 'while the one partie sought to destroie the other, all care of the common-wealth was set aside, and justice and equitie clearelie exiled' (*Hol.*, p. 237). But his moral is untied to any single incident, and Shakespeare gives it greater dramatic force by linking it specifically with the destiny of Gloster. The chronicle supplied hint enough:

Suerlie the duke, verie well learned in the law civill, detesting male-factors, and punishing offenses in severitie of justice, gat him hatred of such as feared condigne reward for their wicked dooings. And although the duke sufficientlie answered to all things against him objected; yet, because his death was determined, his wisdom and innocencie nothing availed. (*Hol.*, p. 211; *Stone*, pp. 250, 265)

In the chronicle Gloster's learning in civil law takes the form of a wearisome passion for litigation. In the play he is first the severe executor of Justice and then its patient, vicarious victim.

As Protector he prescribes the judicial combat between Horner and his prentice, and replaces York by Somerset in France: 'This is the Law, and this Duke Humfreyes doom' (I. iii. 208). When Eleanor is banished he again speaks the formal language of his office: 'the Law thou seest hath judged thee, I cannot justifie whom the Law condemnes' (II. iii. 16). Too much in this manner would have been wearing, but Shakespeare traces in Gloster the humane impulses from which and for which the Law should speak. His practical genius for improvising justice is exemplified in the mock-miracle of St. Albans (II. i), it delights the dramatic townsmen as much as the theatre audience, making Humphrey the shrewd, popular hero respected and 'beloved of the commons'. The King's piety gives place to laughter, displaying his curiously mixed qualities of ingenuousness and insight; and the scene concludes with an elegant exchange of sarcasms, a timely reminder that Suffolk and Beaufort are jealous of Gloster's public virtues.

Shakespeare makes less use in *Part 2* of the heraldic and pageant devices which accent the pattern of *Part 1*, and fuller use of the specifically dramatic techniques of the Morality-play and English Seneca. Borrowing as much of the chronicle language as he can, he illuminates the historical event by casting it into a Morality perspective:

Ah, gracious lord, these days are dangerous:
 Virtue is choked with foul ambition
 And charity chased hence by rancour's hand;
 Foul subornation is predominant
 And equity exiled your highness' land.

(III. i. 142)

'Justice and equitie clearelie exiled', says Holinshed (p. 237). But the Morality abstractions are in their turn tempered by the immediate interest in people that Shakespeare learned from his attempts to make historical facts dramatically convincing.

The private man is never for long masked by the public figure. Gloster speaks of his condemned Duchess in tones admirably poised between personal feeling and the decorum of his office (II. i. 185), and he speaks from his office unequivocally when she is led from the court (II. iii. 16). But as soon as she is gone, his eyes 'full of teares', he asks the King's permission to leave, and for the first time we learn that Shakespeare's Gloster (not the chroniclers') is an old man; the personal pathos is heightened and we are reminded that honour is the prerogative of a fading generation. When he next appears, as looker-on at Eleanor's penance, the scene enlarges into a mutability threnody, including the conventional *Mirror for Magistrates* image of summer giving place to barren winter, and the chronicle sentiment about the irony of personal misfortune—'To think upon my pomp, shall be my hell' (II. iv. 41). But it remains an event in the London streets. The picture of Eleanor's humiliation (however deserved) confesses the cruelty of,

The abject people gazing on thy face,
 With envious looks, laughing at thy shame. (II. iv. 11)

The intensely passive philosophy of Gloster meeting the frustrated malice of his Duchess foreshadows the second scene of *Richard II*, but Gaunt puts jaded faith in the principle of non-resistance to an anointed king, while Gloster's more naïve faith is in the integrity of the law: 'I must offend, before I be attainted' (II. iv. 59). His trial scene (III. i) takes on a symbolic quality. Henry's reaction to it, undescribed in the chronicles, is used in the play to disclose the natural sympathy between the King's impotent saintliness and Gloster's political and personal integrity:

Ah, uncle Humphrey! in thy face I see
 The map of honour, truth, and loyalty . . .

And as the butcher takes away the calf,
 And binds the wretch and beats it when it strays,
 Bearing it to the bloody slaughter-house;
 Even so remorseless have they borne him hence.
 (III. i. 202)

Gloster's murder is a piece of politic butchery at the centre of the 'plotted tragedy' of the conspirators who are credited with a perverse skill in making an unnatural offence taste of expediency and practical wisdom: 'But yet we want a Colour for his death', and ' 'Tis meet he be condemned by course of Law' (III. i. 234).

We are not made witnesses to the actual murder, but Gloster's strangled body is exhibited in a sort of verbal close-up, a remarkable passage, which throws an unusual stress on physical horror (III. ii. 160 ff.). By this device a frightening spectacular force is given to the dominant historical and tragic idea of the play. By a staged metaphor now, 'Virtue is choked with foul ambition', and the play's mime displays the historical cause-and-effect, by which the murder of Gloster issues in the Cade rebellion. The strangled body lies on the stage while the commons 'like an angry hive of bees' beat upon the doors.

But his death, as Gloster says himself, is but the prologue to the plotted tragedy. Shakespeare is exposing a period of English history when atrocities became part of the routine of public life and stayed so for some twenty years. Hence his knowledge, if not experience, of the arts of English Seneca becomes relevant to his own art as dramatic historian. It is perhaps no accident that at this point of the narrative Holinshed refers us to 'maister Foxe's book of acts and monuments' (*Hol.*, p. 212). No reader of Foxe could be easily startled by the *Thyestes*, the *Troades*, or *Titus Andronicus*. And in the central acts of *Part 2* we can observe the confluence of the Senecal dramatic tradition, with its ruthless retributive morality, and the Christian (or Hebraic) cult of *Vindicta Dei*. These acts present not only what Foxe calls 'the cruel death or martyrdom of the Good Duke of Glocester' but also 'the judgement of God upon them which persecuted the Duke' (Foxe (1583), p. 706). But Shakespeare is not uncritical of the myth behind the grim theocratic drama that features the deaths of Suffolk and Winchester. Although he allows some of his characters to enjoy a complacent relish in witnessing or executing the interventions of the wrath of God, the audience is not allowed to share it. All the acts of retribution in this play and the next are invested in an atmosphere of evil—the images sickening and grotesque:

And thou that smiledst at good Duke Humphrey's death
Against the senseless winds shall grin in vain.

(IV. i. 76)

Suffolk's death is an act of lynch law, and one of several similar happenings which is at once a satisfying act of retribution, and therefore a recognition of the chronicle 'Providence'; and 'a barbarous and bloody spectacle' (IV. i. 174) and therefore a moral and aesthetic challenge to the validity of that Providence. In his presentation of the Cardinal's death (III. iii), however, and in his insinuations of the causal chain of prophecy, omen, curse, imprecation and dream, Shakespeare does stage the pitiless pageant of Holinshed and Foxe—*Vindicta Dei* works through revenge figures, through the worm of conscience (as plastic as a tape-worm) and through 'chance' contingencies. But so much (were it not for the tightness of the organization) might have been within the range of Peele or Greene. Shakespeare's play is distinguished by its understanding of the tragic rhythm of political history.

At first glance it might seem that Shakespeare's treatment of the Cade rebels is less sympathetic than Holinshed's. The chronicle Cade is 'of goodlie stature and right pregnant wit'; his 'fair promises of reformation' and his 'Complaint of the Commons of Kent' are responsible and sensible (*Hol.*, p. 222); and his tactics at the start are admirably humane. Why then the comic but bloody spectacle of the fourth act of *Part 2*? Brents Stirling¹¹ suggests that Shakespeare was aligning himself with those who most severely judged the rioting Brownists and Anabaptists of his own day, and claims a specific parallel between the dramatic Cade and Hacket, a riot leader convicted in 1591. But Hacket was a far grosser fanatic than the Cade of the play (out of spiritual zeal he bit off a man's nose and swallowed it), and in any case there is evidence that Shakespeare deliberately avoided giving any religious savour to the rebellion; it might have been quite otherwise had he delayed the Cardinal's death for a scene or two. It has been said too that Shakespeare coarsened his stage mobs from personal antipathy, and no doubt he had an eye for outrages in the London streets, a nose for the sour breath of the plebeians and an ear for riotous chop-logic; but at no point in any play do they pervert Shakespeare's objectivity of judgment or his rich human sympathies.

To understand the Cade scenes we must recognize that Shakespeare distorts Holinshed's account of the rebellion itself merely in order to emphasize its place in a larger and more significant movement of

¹¹ *The Populace in Shakespeare* (1949), pp. 101 ff.

historical cause and effect. The rebellion is offered as an evil consequence of misrule, specifically of the misrule of Suffolk. The fuse is touched early, when Suffolk tears the petitions of the innocent, conscientious citizens (I. iii. 37). But the petitioners, voicing their bewildered, nervous protests, the apprentices of the Peter Thump scenes, and the crowd at St. Albans, while they make up the 'populace' are not yet the 'mob'. The mob emerges at the moment of Gloster's death, when the people are compelled, through lack of a law-giver, through the total breakdown of the constitutional rule of order, to take the law into their own hands. The 'populace' with a just grievance is by the exercise of violence transformed into the 'mob', executors of lynch law. At first they are free from a 'stubborn opposite intent' (III. ii. 251), but finally, 'thirsting after prey' (IV. iv. 51), they are capable of a full range of atrocities.

The violence is not merely self-generated; all that York stands for in the way of destructive political purpose is right behind the reprisals of Smithfield. Nor are the reprisals quite arbitrary. Since Gloster is the dramatic symbol of regular administration of the law, and unquestioning faith in its authority, it is no accident that Shakespeare focused the iconoclasm of the rioters upon the agents and monuments of the civil law. To do so he turned back in the chronicle to the Tyler rebellion in the reign of *Richard II* and borrowed just those touches which furthered his purpose—the killing of the lawyers, the destruction of the Savoy and the Inns of Court, and the burning of the records of the realm.¹² It is significant too that Lord Say, the 'treasurer of England' in 1450, is merged with the Lord Chief Justice beheaded by Tyler in 1381; his stage martyrdom (IV. vii) is that of a humane judge—thus obliquely repeating the point about Gloster.

Holinshed tells how the rising was subdued by Canterbury and Winchester bringing to Southwark a pardon from the King (*Hol.*, p. 226; *Stone*, p. 280). In the play the bishops figure only momentarily, in a soft-hearted plan of Henry's (V. iv. 9), and Shakespeare abstains from giving to Lord Say the role he allows Sir Thomas in comparable circumstances in *Sir Thomas More*, quietening the people by authoritative eloquence (II. iv. 62–177). Although Lord Say has a comparable dignity,

The trust I have is in mine innocence,
And therefore am I bold and resolute,
(IV. iv. 59)

¹² See *Stone*, 271, 277–8, for the relevant chronicle passages.

he shares the vulnerability of Gloster as well as his integrity, and his head soon dances on a pole. Stafford tries abuse (IV. ii. 117), but that fails too, and it is left to Buckingham and Clifford to restore their version of 'order' (IV. viii). In place of the leisured approach of two prelates, gathering exhausted citizens about them, Shakespeare offers the murderous rabblement, their full cry silenced by a trumpet and by the appearance of two leading soldiers with their body-guards. The pardon, garbled by Buckingham (IV. viii. 8), is not made a factor in the peace. Clifford steps in with a sharply different appeal, invoking, as Shakespeare puts it elsewhere, the ghost of Henry V. Cade brutally reminds the people that they have still to recover their 'ancient freedom', but his brand of demagoguery is surpassed by the fine irrelevance of Clifford's patriotic exhortation—as from soldier to soldiers, from one Englishman to another. The oratory is not endorsed by the situation in the play (no French invasion threatens) but its effect is to canalize destructive energy along a track less threatening to the Nobles of England—profitable indeed, and as Shakespeare shows in *Henry V*, even glorious in its own way. But *Henry V* touches the heroic through its setting of a tiny group of English against terrible odds; here the mob yell of 'A Clifford! A Clifford! We'll follow the King and Clifford' (IV. viii. 53), is ironically close in spirit to the 'Kill and knock down' of the scene's opening. The true interpretation of these events is voiced by the only figure on the stage who is not implicated any longer, in Cade's: 'Was ever feather so lightly blown to and fro, as this multitude? The name of Henry the Fifth hailes them to an hundred mischiefs and makes them leave me desolate' (IV. viii. 54). Cade is seen for what he is, but when he is chased off stage by his followers, there is a strong impression that he is victimized. The blood-lust of the mob has been diverted but not sublimated.

In accents reminiscent of his apostrophe on Horner's death (II. iii. 99), Henry acknowledges the gruesome gift of Cade's head: 'The head of Cade? Great God, how just art thou?' (V. i. 68). There is this recognition that God's spirit showed itself in the dispersal of the rebels, not in the tide of rebellion; in the killing of Cade, not in his subornation. But Henry's outlook is of a piece with his isolation and impotence. Cade's death is not much more than a marginal note (IV. x); it occurs when he is alone and starving and cannot have the central significance that Henry's piety attributes to it. Iden, the yeoman in the garden and Cade's killer, is (as E. M. W. Tillyard puts it) a 'symbol of degree', one who 'seeks not to wax great by others' waning'; but he is a formal symbol,

mechanically put together out of the chronicle, and can only appear as a 'representative figure' to King Henry himself in a scene which Shakespeare is careful not to put last. As it is, the silence of the stage garden is not allowed to still the audience's memory of the clamour of Southwark; the internecine violence of the rebellion is carried through, across the recessed interludes, to the battlefield of St. Albans, where Clifford himself speaks the most terrible of Shakespeare's pronouncements about war (V. ii. 31 ff.).

Thus the moral of the last part of the play is not the simple-minded one of the *Mirror for Magistrates* which tells 'How Jack Cade traitorously rebelling against his King, was for his treasons and cruel doings worthily punished'.¹³ It is assimilated into a firm comprehensive structure, a version of political and historical tragedy that will serve later as the ground of *Julius Caesar*—another play which moves through the plotting and execution of an assassination, through the generation of lynch-law in the streets, to the deflection of that violence into civil war.

Part 3 and the Shape of Anarchy

The tragic alignments of *Part 3* are declared on the St. Albans battlefield. Henry pre-figures the sacrificial victim, suspended between action and inaction—he will, 'nor fight nor fly' (V. ii. 74). Richard of York is the agent of that political realism that is born in *Part 2* to flourish in the later plays; he is the calculating joker and the killer who despises the law of arms, rejoicing in the superstitious prophecy by which he slaughters Somerset underneath 'an ale-house' paltry sign', and he states the harsh moral assumption that makes for anarchy in *Part 3*

Sword, hold thy temper; heart, be wrathful still:
Priests pray for enemies, but princes kill.

(V. ii. 71)

Clifford, Richard's antagonist in fact and symbol, is not a 'machiauel' but a nihilist, recognizing the virtues of chivalry and order but dedicated to the defilement of both. Some disturbances of the text and inconsistency of fact suggest that his key speech (V. ii. 31-65), provoked by York's killing of the elder Clifford, was written during or immediately after the composition of *Part 3*, and set back into *Part 2* to offer

¹³ *Mirror*, ed. L. B. Campbell (1938), p. 171.

intimations of the violence to come.¹⁴ Its opening lines are powerfully symbolic:

Shame and confusion! all is on the rout;
Fear frames disorder, and disorder wounds
Where it should guard.

(V. ii. 31)

They refer literally to the sort of confusion sometimes reported in the chronicles, where men are led to kill their friends instead of their enemies. But Shakespeare abstains from specifying the kind of disorder; by not limiting the connotation of 'disorder', 'frame' and 'confusion' he keeps the abstract force of the words and makes the image immense and the idea metaphysically reverberant. In the next lines war is both the son of hell and the minister of heaven, ideas from Holinshed transmuted into a searching and disturbing rhetoric:

O war, thou son of hell,
Whom angry heavens do make their minister,
Throw in the frozen bosoms of our part
Hot coals of vengeance!

But while the speech epitomizes scattered groups of chronicle ideas, it keeps the urgency of the battlefield and it charges its destructive generalizations about war with heroic resolution:

Let no soldier fly.
He that is truly dedicate to war
Hath no self-love, nor he that loves himself
Hath not essentially but by circumstance
The name of valour.

The simple idea that the true soldier does not nurse his life is transformed with measured, emphatic finality, into an absolute acceptance of an ideal of nihilistic self-sacrifice. The nihilism that follows outreaches the St. Albans situation and assumes cosmic scale:

O, let the vile world end,
And the premised flames of the last day
Knit earth and heaven together!
Now let the general trumpet blow his blast,
Particularities and petty sounds
To cease!

¹⁴ In 3HVI 1.1.9, the elder Clifford is said by York, his stage killer, to have been slain by common soldiers. Since 2HVI v.ii. and 3HVI 1.1.iii are both indebted to a passage in Hall (see *Stone*, p. 297) it is possible that Shakespeare revised the earlier scene to motivate Clifford's killing of Rutland.

The lines glance with magnificent assurance from the image of the last judgment to the dead figure of old Clifford, to age and wisdom in time of peace:

Wast thou ordain'd, dear father,
To lose thy youth in peace, and to achieve
The silver livery of advised age,
And in thy reverence and thy chair-days, thus
To die in ruffian battle?

There is a suddenly gathering intimacy, and then, out of the personal pathos, a re-generation of the mood of total war:

Even at this sight
My heart is turn'd to stone: and while 'tis mine,
It shall be stony.

The rare accomplishment of Clifford's speech should not blind us to its organic function in the plays. It is simply the most lucid and telling expression of one range of anarchic impulses at large in the tetralogy. The other range, which does as much or more to precipitate anarchy, is represented in the emergence of the Richards of York and Gloster. In the play as history, Richard of York is isolated from the rival barons by his greater political know-how. But, equally important, in the play as theatrical entertainment he is isolated by his privileged relationship with the audience. The politician is from the chronicle; the soliloquizer is from the dramatic conventions of the Morality-play, and the key to Shakespeare's success is the intimate connection that he found between the two. The main fact about the chronicle York is that he takes his opportunities skilfully because, unlike the unreflective opportunists among his peers, he anticipates, calculates, and prepares the ground. His 'attempt', says Holinshed, 'was politicly handled', 'secretly kept' and his purpose 'ready' before it was 'openly published' (*Hol.*, p. 212; *Stone*, p. 255). If all that York stands for in history is to be properly conveyed in the play, his emergence when 'mischief breaks out' must take his enemies by surprise. But it must not take the audience by surprise; hence Shakespeare introduces short conspiratorial scenes to put fellow Yorkists *partly* 'in the know' (the colloquialism fits the mood), and adds a number of soliloquies to put the audience wholly in the know. The soliloquy given to York at *Part 2* (I. i. 209) becomes the first experiment in the

form to be turned to such advantage in *Richard III*; it enlists the audience's sympathy against the 'others', exploits its readiness to take a low view of human nature and be brutally realistic about politics. In this first soliloquy York voices the muscular chronicle judgment that critics have sometimes taken for Shakespeare's definitive verdict on Henry:

And force perforce I'll make him yield the crown.
Whose bookish rule hath pull'd fair England down.
(Pt. 2, I. i. 253)

But the rough verbal shoulder-shrugging of York is precisely expressive of the factious energy which does most to pull down fair England. A second soliloquy, in the same manner, sets York, 'the labouring spider', behind the inception of the Cade rebellion (Pt. 2, V. i. 1).

In a passage of reflection on 'the tragicall state of this land under the rent regiment of King Henrie', Holinshed speaks of the 'sundrie practices' which 'imbecilled' the 'prerogative' of the King, and wonders at the pitched battles, which he divides into two groups, that were fought over and about him (*Hol.*, p. 272-3). Shakespeare keeps the outline and emphasizes the distinction between the military and political sources of catastrophe. The first two acts deal with the battles of 1460-61, when Henry had that 'naked name of king'; the third and fourth acts are dominantly political, and about the chicanery of the nobles with their rival kings; and the last presents the campaigns of 1471, in which politics and war are indistinguishable. Once again one is struck in performance by the expressive force of the mere dumb-show and noise (witness the stage directions); kings and crowns are treated as stage properties to enforce the chronicle moral about contempt for sovereignty, and Warwick is made quite literally the setter-up and plucker-down of kings (e.g. IV. iii). The pantomime is as skilful in the political scenes. The scene in the French court (III. iii), for instance, where Margaret has won the support of King Lewis, only to lose it to Warwick who comes as ambassador from Edward, becomes a superb exercise in the acrobatics of diplomacy, when letters are at last brought from Edward about the Bona marriage.

For the greater part of the third play Shakespeare is content to follow Holinshed in making his characters public masks, without intimately felt life, and therefore hardly seeming responsible for what they do. He tightens the sequence of atrocities, telescopes time, and eliminates all rituals of government, until the stage action and reaction appear yet more savagely mechanical than in the chronicle. So long as the characterization

is neutral the first tetralogy displays a barbarous providence ruling murderous automatons whose reactions are predictable in terms of certain quasi-Hobbesian assumptions about human nature: when argument fails men resort to force; when an oath is inconvenient they break it; their power challenged, they retort with violence; their power subdued they resort to lies, murder or suicide; their honour impugned, they look for revenge; their enemies at their mercy, they torture and kill them; and if a clash of loyalties occurs they resolve it in the interest of their own survival. Such might be the vision of the play's pantomime, but its dimensions are not confined to its pantomime and to its shallower rhetoric. The anarchic, egocentric impulses are not presented as the inescapable laws of human nature; they are at most manifestations of forces that automatically take over when the constraints of government are withheld. Law and order cease to prevail when men cease to believe in them, and the process by which this comes about is explored in the play's dominant characters.

The figures of Clifford and York who, in *Part 2*, personalize two kinds of anarchic scepticism—the soldier's nihilism and the politician's realism—are displaced in *Part 3* by the more significant contrast between Richard of Gloster and King Henry. With obvious propriety these are chosen to characterize the moral tensions which give meaning to the deep chaos of the last phase of the reign. But the crimes of the Roses Wars are so multiple and their agents so numerous, that Shakespeare could not attempt, even if at this early date it were within his power, the comprehensively intimate exploration of evil he undertakes in *Macbeth*, and he allows himself only that measure of intimate soliloquy and address which will accord with the conventions of historical pageant.

In the first two plays the chronicle myth of a King absurdly and irrelevantly virtuous can just about pass muster, and in the first scene of *Part 3*, Henry's virtue is still associated with impotence; his war of 'frowns, words, and threats' is disarmed by his readiness to concede the Yorkist claims, by the wry defection of Exeter (unwarranted by the history), and by the Robin Hood trickery of Warwick; his conscience-stricken asides carry as little conviction as his military posturing, and one feels the *gaucherie* is the playwright's as well as the character's. In the next phase, however, Shakespeare's tragic art wins distinction from the ferocity of the material and Henry assumes a stature outside the chronicle compass.

Both the finer qualities of Henry's virtue and the intensity of Richard of Gloster's virulence spring from Shakespeare's treatment of the Battle

of Wakefield. Conventional heroic ideals cannot survive the battle which turns on two blasphemies of chivalry—the killing of the prince and the degradation of the mock-king. Clifford's slaughter of Rutland (I. iii), in calculated contempt of the Priest and the law of arms, is a repudiation of the myth that expects from every 'gentleman' in battle the virtues of the lion. The values apt to an heroic battle play are displaced by those prevailing in parts of English Seneca; in Heywood's *Thyestes*, for example, where 'ire thinks nought unlawful to be done', 'Babes be murdered ill' and 'bloodshed lies the land about' (I. i. 79–89). Shakespeare gives the revenge motive a great political significance by relating it to the dynastic feud for which Clifford is not alone responsible.

Anarchism, Shakespeare had learned from the Cade scenes, is more dramatic when it is iconoclastic, and the next Wakefield outrage, the paper crowning (I. iv), mutilates the idols of Knighthood, Kingship, Womanhood and Fatherhood. In making a ritual of the atrocity Shakespeare imitates the history—the scene is a formal set-piece because it was so staged by its historical performers. Holinshed tells how the Lancastrians made obeisance and cried, 'Haile, king without rule'—'as the Jewes did unto Christ' (*Hol.* p. 269; *Stone*, p. 299). Although Shakespeare suppresses the open blasphemy, he keeps the crucifixion parallel with the line, 'Now looks he like a King' (I. iv. 96), and, more significantly, by combining the mockery reported in one of a choice of chronicle accounts with the paper-coronation in another (*Hol.*, p. 268; *Stone*, p. 299). He takes little liberty with the chronicle, moreover, when he makes the stage-managed historical ceremony into an ordered, antiphonal combat of words, with Northumberland presiding, as it were, in the rhetorical lists. In spite of the controlling formality the language moves on several planes between gnomic generalization, "'Tis government that makes them seem divine, The want thereof makes thee abominable' (I. iv. 132); stylized feeling, 'Oh tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide! How could'st thou drain the life-blood of the child' (I. iv. 137); plain, personal pathos, 'This cloth thou dip'dst in blood of my sweet boy' (I. iv. 157); and colloquial venom, 'And where's that valiant crook-back prodigy, Dicky, your boy, that with his grumbling voice Was wont to cheer his dad in mutinies?' In the blinding scene of *King Lear* the same changes will be rung in a richer peal, but there is enough in the Wakefield scene's counterpoint of reflection and feeling to tax the resources of its actors.

Henry is not made witness to the event. He is allowed the dignity of total isolation, and when he comes to the stage molchill at Towton

(II. v), it is to speak the most moving of Shakespeare's comments on the civil wars. Shakespeare is less fully engaged when he writes about the objectives of the battle as seen by the participants than by its futility as it appears to a suffering observer. Hall had felt a similar need to withdraw into reflection:

This conflict was in maner unnaturall, for in it the sonne fought agaynst the father, the brother agaynst the brother, the Nephew agaynst the Uncle, and the tenaunt agaynst hys Lorde, which slaughter did sore and much weaken the puyssance of this realme. (1548/1809, p. 256)

In *Gorboduc* and in Daniel's *Civil Wars* the commonplace is retailed with a complacent omniscience damaging to living language.¹⁵ But by attributing it to the King in the course of battle Shakespeare is able to quicken it with personal feeling; beneath the ceremonious surface we again sense the pulse and surge of events.

The hint for the opening lines is one of Hall's 'ebb and flow of battle' clichés (*Stone*, p. 306), but Shakespeare insinuates rarer images of the peaceful, symmetrical rhythms of nature—'the morning's war' and 'the shepherd blowing of his nails', and after touching the conflicts inherent in nature, arrests the movement of battle in that of the sea—'the equal poise of this fell war'. A glance at the humour and pathos of Henry's isolation (Margaret and Clifford have chid him from the battle), with a touch of wry exhaustion ('Would I were dead, if God's good will were so'), offers assurance of Shakespeare's gift for 're-living the past', and the sequent lines of exquisite pastoral seem to re-create the convention out of the kind of human experience which underlies it. An alarum returns us to the battle and to a glimpse of its victims in another statuesque mirror-scene in which blood and pallor are made heraldic (II. v. 97 ff.). Once again the feeling for the past is the cathedral-pavement sort, not the chronicle sort; it is at once a refreshing and a potentially devitalizing mood, and after a hundred and twenty lines Shakespeare pulls us out of it and lets the pantomime get under way again.

The authority of Henry's commentary on Towton is sufficiently memorable to help vindicate the innocence of the speech he makes before the keepers arrest him: 'My pity hath been balm to heal their wounds. My mildness hath allay'd their swelling griefs, My mercy dry'd their water-flowing tears' (IV. viii. 41 ff.). From this and a few

¹⁵ The peroration of *Gorboduc* and the first stanza of *The Civil Wars*.

other passages in the plays it would be possible to present Henry as the centre of a moral parable whose lineaments are traced in Thomas Elyot's *The Governour*. The King, says Elyot, must be merciful, but too much *Clementia* is a sickness of mind; as soon as any offend him the King should 'immediately strike him with his most terrible dart of vengeance'. But the occasions when Henry seems guilty of an excess of virtue are rare, and he is at his most impressive when he is martyred in his last scene of *Part 3*, not when he tries to throw his weight about in the first. The Wakefield battle once fought, moreover, 'the terrible dart of vengeance' is lost to the armoury of virtue. Henry's bemused and disappointed faith in the political efficacy of mercy, pity, peace and love does not deserve the editorial mockery it has received—'characteristically effeminate' and 'smug complacency'.¹⁶ Henry's virtue may be defective but Shakespeare commands from his audience a full reverence for it when, at the moment of his extermination, the King confronts his ultimate antagonist, Richard of Gloster.

Richard is introduced as York's heroic soldier son, but in his first characteristic speech of length (II. i. 79 ff.) he becomes the bitter, unchivalrous avenger—a reaction to the Messenger's report of Wakefield which seems instinctive and inevitable. But Richard not only reacts to events (all the barons do that) he also becomes the conscious embodiment of all the drives—moral, intellectual and physical—that elsewhere show themselves only in the puppetry. Translating into theatrical terms, we might say that when he takes the stage for his first exercise of the soliloquy-prerogative he inherits from York (at the end of III. ii), his language shows him capable of playing the parts of York, Clifford, Edward, Margaret or Warwick. All their energies are made articulate: the doggedness of York 'that reaches at the moon' and the same eye for the glitter of the Marlovian crown; the dedication to evil which characterizes Clifford; the prurience of Edward; the decorated and ruthless rhetoric of Margaret; and Warwick's gifts of king-maker, resolute 'to command, to check, to overbear'. Shakespeare has him use the fantastic lore about his birth to admirable effect: it strengthens the impression of blasphemy against love and fertility, makes deformity license depravity and, most important, allegorizes the birth of a political monster in the present by recalling that of a physical monster in the past, 'like to a chaos or an unlick'd bear-whelp'. But it is not all specifically birth-imagery—about Richard having teeth and the dogs howling. The sense of violent

¹⁶ See notes to IV. viii. 38–50 in Hart's Arden and Wilson's New Cambridge Editions.

struggle, of unnatural energies breaking free, is best caught in lines that are not explicitly about birth at all:

And I—like one lost in a thorny wood,
That rends the thorns and is rent with the thorns,
Seeking a way and straying from the way;
Not knowing how to find the open air,
But toiling desperately to find it out—
Torment myself to catch the English crown:
And from that torment I will free myself,
Or hew my way out with a bloody axe.

(III. ii. 174)

It is from the kennel of England's womb that this hell-hound is to bite itself free. At the end of the soliloquy Richard promises the audience a performance more entertaining than any heroic fantasy or medieval Trojan legend; he will outplay all politic dissemblers, 'add colours to the camelion', 'change shapes with Proteus' and 'set the *murtherous* Machivill to school'. The ground is prepared for *Richard III*, where for three acts the comic idiom will dominate the tragic, with politics a kings' game best played by cunning actors.

But the continuity with the mood of *Richard III* is deliberately fractured and the tragic mode made to dominate the comic in the scene of Henry's death. The King opposes Richard's tongue and sword with a moral force that Shakespeare makes all but transcendent and the 'scene of death' that 'Roscius'—the actor and devil Richard—performs at last, comes near to a tragic consummation. Yet the qualifications 'all but' and 'comes near' are, after all, necessary. The brute facts of history will not allow a satisfying tragic outcome; Shakespeare cannot pretend that the martyrdom of an innocent king appeased the appetite of providence or exhausted the sophisticated savagery that Richard stands for.

Nor can Hall's dynastic myth be enlisted to reassure us that all will be well when the White Rose is wedded to the Red—that will only be possible at the end of *Richard III* when, in a kind of postscript to the complete tetralogy, Richmond will step into the Elizabethan present and address an audience sufficiently remote from Henry's reign. As it is, the plays of *Henry VI* are not, as it were, haunted by the ghost of Richard II, and the catastrophes of the civil wars are not laid to Bolingbroke's charge; the catastrophic virtue of Henry and the catastrophic evil of Richard are not an inescapable inheritance from the distant past but are generated by the happenings we are made to witness.

The questioning of the ways of God and the roles of good and evil in English history will be re-opened in *Richard III*, but in the interim *Part 3* ends, as tragedies remotely derived from fertility rites of course should, with some elaborate imagery of autumn reaping. It is fitting that Richard should be standing by to blast the harvest and to boast himself a Judas.

Note

First Edition. *Richard II* was first printed in 1597 as 'The Tragedie of King Richard the second. As it hath beene publikely acted by the right Honourable the Lorde Chamberlaine his Seruants.'

Modern Editions. The most recent authoritative editions are those of the New Cambridge, edited by J. Dover Wilson (1939), New Variorum, edited by M. W. Black (1955), and New Arden, edited by Peter Ure (1956).

Scholarship and Criticism. Convenient reprints are Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H. E. Butler in the Loeb Classical Library (4 vols., 1921-2), and Longinus, *On the Sublime*, trans. W. Rhys (1899). Of works by Elizabethan rhetoricians and educationalists may be chosen four essential texts: Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), edited by G. H. Mair (1909); Roger Ascham's *The Scholemaster* (1570), edited by W. A. Wright (1904); George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), edited by Gladys Willcock and Alice Walker (1936); and John Brinsley's *Ludus Literarius or The Grammar Schoole* (1612), edited by E. T. Campagnac (1917).

Useful background studies are D. L. Clark, *Rhetoric and Poetry in the Renaissance* (1922) and W. G. Crane, *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (1937). T. W. Baldwin has gathered up *Shakespeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (2 vols., 1944), and Sister Miriam Joseph has analysed *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (1947). D. C. Allen's edition of Meres' *Treatise on Poetrie* (Illinois University Studies in Lang. and Lit., XVI, 1933) discusses 'Renaissance Latin Quotation Books'. Among general studies of drama may be cited F. L. Lucas, *Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy* (1922), W. Farnham's *Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (1936), M. C. Bradbrook's *Themes and Conventions of Elizabethan Tragedy* (1935; paperback, 1960), and M. E. Prior, *The Language of Tragedy* (1947). Studies in imagery are numerous; here may be suggested Caroline Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery* (1935), W. H. Clemen, *The Development of Shakespeare's Imagery* (trans. 1951), E. A. Armstrong, *Shakespeare's Imagination* (1946), Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (1947), Molly Mahood, *Shakespeare's Word-play* (1957), K. Muir, 'Shakespeare and Rhetoric', *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (1954), and F. R. Johnson 'Shakespearian Imagery and Senecan Imitation', *J. Q. Adams Memorial Studies* (1948); for Shakespeare's history plays see pre-notes to Chapters IV and VII. Of particular relevance for *Richard II* are R. D. Altick, 'Symphonic Imagery in *Richard II*', *P.M.L.A.* (1947), R. F. Hill, 'Shakespeare's Early Tragic Mode', *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1958), P. A. Jorgensen, 'Vertical Patterns in *Richard II*', *Shakespeare Association Bulletin* (1948), and I. Ribner 'Bolingbroke, a True Machiavellian', *Modern Language Quarterly* (1948).

V

Dramatic Techniques and Interpretation in 'Richard II'

R. F. HILL

Strumbo. No by my troth, mistresse nicebice, how fine you
cā nickname me, I think you were broght up in the universitie
of bridewell, you have your rhetorick so ready at your toongs
end, as if you were never well warned when you were yong.
(*Lochrine*, 1185)

★

MODERN critical censure falls with varying emphasis upon the mannerisms and self-advertising ornamentation of Shakespeare's early plays. Recent investigation of Elizabethan poetic theory has explained these practices but the general critical tone is still apologetic. Yet there is less offence than is sometimes thought. This chapter aims to show the strengths as well as the limitations of the admittedly artificial language of *Richard II*. And a hard look at the other early plays reveals a surprising degree of language control. For the most part *The Taming of the Shrew* is free of heavy ornamentation and its conversational verse provides just the right mode of discourse for the easy-going gentlemen of Padua. At the other extreme *Love's Labour's Lost* moulds and sugars every phrase, but the goal is parody and the castigation of the false idealism of youth. *Richard III* gives us two kinds of rhetoric; one for the weeping queens, stilted, shrill, ineffectual; one for Richard, muscular, invincible. However, this control of language works with a surface brilliance symptomatic of an approach to creative writing which begins in the excitement of words and may remain there self-absorbed. An appreciation of this mood of linguistic excitement is the first step towards a clear view of *Richard II*. The next step involves critical judgment as to the extent to which Shakespeare managed to shape this highly self-conscious and mannered language for tragic purposes.

Richard II is not the model of dramatic excellence that Coleridge would

have us believe, but it achieves much within the limits of its artifice. It is necessary, as I have argued elsewhere, to accept the artifice, to see it as a projection of life in terms of a highly conventionalized art. Such a view is most helpful to an understanding of the passages of involved word-play in *Richard II*. The plays on 'down/base-court' (III. iii. 178-83), 'care' (IV. i. 195-9), 'face' (IV. i. 281-8) are artificial and obtrusive. Worse, they issue from the lips of Richard at his moments of deepest suffering when, in terms of natural psychology, one would expect a distraction which prohibits orderly discourse, expressing itself, if at all, in broken, simple language. Has Shakespeare falsified here through his delight in quibbling? Must Richard's grief be shallow since he can so file his phrases? Any answer must recognize that it is not only Richard who vents distress in this mannered way. His wife plays nicely upon the words 'joy' and 'sorrow' in her mood of anxious foreboding (III. iv. 10-16) and John of Gaunt, in greater torment, is even more dexterous in his quibble on 'Gaunt' (II. i. 74-83). Furthermore an examination of the style of the early tragedies and tragical histories shows that mental and emotional distress is always accompanied by a heightening of language in the direction of patterning and contrivance. It is seen not only in single word quibbles—'hands' (*Titus Andronicus*, III. ii. 25-33), 'I' (*Romeo and Juliet*, III. ii. 45-51), 'Maine' (2 *Henry VI*, I. i. 209-14)—but also in speech which is patterned or otherwise self-advertising in ornament. A clear relationship can be observed between heightened feeling and verbal contrivance which can hardly be the result of chance. Shakespeare is deliberately at his most artificial where one would expect him, in terms of natural psychology, to aim at spontaneity. Hence one's impression of bad taste in the early word-play, its alienation rather than enlistment of sympathetic response.

But if Shakespeare is not attempting naturalistic representation the error may lie in our approach. Representation in *Richard II* is consistently rhetorical, in the sense of its being unashamedly aware and proud of its linguistic means. At this level one should expect intensification of feeling to be matched by an intensification of the characteristic means. Such moments are the cue for an added virtuosity which will distinguish them from what is throughout a high pitch of elaboration. Shakespeare certainly succeeds in this. Further, whilst the artifice may keep us at a distance from the feeling at the back of it, the presence of feeling is unmistakably established, for any heightening of language, however unusual in kind or unexpected in particular contexts, creates some degree of heightened response. John of Gaunt and Richard establish that they

are distressed though we may wonder at their clever play of thought and word. Granted a taste for such cleverness it may be admired at some expense to the tragic feeling it is expressing. Viewed absolutely such a cleavage between art and matter is a failure of Art. But the absolute view is not the best way to an understanding of *Richard II*. Viewed relatively, as rhetorical tragedy, a place must be allowed to language for its own sake; Shakespeare wanted to be admired for his words. This special appeal indicates the roots of the genre in Senecan tragedy.

Attention to the surface of writing was not, however, as in Seneca accompanied by a lack of discrimination. It has been argued that in the presentation of heightened emotional states *Richard II* consistently observes a convention. How successful is the rhetoric in characterization? The simple view of Richard as a verbal trifter, as one acting out his life rather than living it, must already be qualified by the recognition that in the early tragic style high feeling is always accompanied by high and often patterned rhetoric. The apparently self-conscious control of language does not, of itself, indicate dispassion and triviality in character. Having regard to this I shall examine the language of the play particularly in its definition of Richard and Bolingbroke.

The prevailing elevated diction of *Richard II* is immediately apparent in Richard's summoning of Bolingbroke and Mowbray:

Then call them to our presence; face to face,
And frowning brow to brow, ourselves will hear
The accuser and the accused freely speak:
High-stomach'd are they both, and full of ire,
In rage deaf as the sea, hasty as fire.

(I. i. 15)

The elaborate repetitions, the tautology of the last two lines with their high-pitched similes, suggest a relish for ceremony, a determination to make the utmost of a public appearance which will demonstrate the irresistible authority of the crown in subduing headstrong subjects. His comment on Bolingbroke's passionate accusation of Mowbray—

How high a pitch his resolution soars!—

further's one's impression of his irresponsible enjoyment of a serious situation. Having enjoyed the spectacle of their mutual hatred he expects to dispose of it lightly:

Wrath-kindled gentlemen, be ruled by me;
Let's purge this choler without letting blood:

This we prescribe, though no physician;
 Deep malice makes too deep incision;
 Forget, forgive; conclude and be agreed;
 Our doctors say this is no month to bleed.

(I. i. 152)

The jingle of the rhymes, the skipping rhythms, compel one to see the punning physician image as hovering on the verge of levity. If Richard is playing a game the antagonists are in deadly earnest; neither is to be daunted by mere words. Richard tries the power of words again, this time rhetorical commonplaces—'Rage must be withstood', 'lions make leopards tame'—but Mowbray neatly turns the second of these into an argument for his continued defiance. Richard is forced to concede to a settlement of the quarrel in the lists at Coventry.

In essentials Richard is already 'placed' for us; an immature delight in the ceremony of power coupled with a fatal tendency to equate the word of authority with authority indeed. Yet, although he speaks with a conscious distinction, he is no more eloquent and ornate than Bolingbroke or Mowbray. Bolingbroke points his speech with word-play and describes his own tongue as 'The slavish motive of recanting fear'. His voice has no individuality in the high rhetoric, and the Coventry scene (I. iii) shows him as much liable as Richard or Mowbray or Gaunt to embellish his speech with periphrasis and simile material. It is Bolingbroke who tells us that his exile is to be 'a long apprenticeship To foreign passages' which will end in no greater boast than that he was 'a journeyman to grief'. His answer to his father's speech of consolation is a cluster of synonymous illustrations all enforcing the same point (I. iii. 294-303). The studied rhetoric conveys the vehemence of grief but over-lays distinction of character.

However, more may be revealed than is at first apparent. Richard's speech beginning 'Draw near And list what with our council we have done' (I. iii. 123-43) looks like a self-indulgent display of royal authority blown to its fullest with repetitions, personifications and double epithets. Second thoughts suggest that the bombast is self-protective, evidence both of an inner insecurity and discomfort in an unpleasant situation. He must convince himself and his auditors that the doom of banishment justly fits the crime. But the quarrel itself is scarcely a crime; exile is necessary for Bolingbroke and Mowbray because Richard himself is involved in the murder of Thomas of Woodstock which lies at the back of the quarrel. Hence Richard's refuge in pretty periphrases to pronounce the judgment which a guilty conscience at once desires and abhors:

You, cousin Hereford, upon pain of life,
Till twice five summers have enrich'd our fields
Shall not regret our fair dominions . . .

Norfolk, for thee remains a heavier doom,
Which I with some unwillingness pronounce:
The sly slow hours shall not determinate
The dateless limit of thy dear exile . . .

As soon as Mowbray has gone Richard, ostensibly moved by John of Gaunt's sadness, reduces Bolingbroke's sentence by four years. This magnanimity is hard to understand since Richard has already referred to 'sky-aspiring and ambitious thoughts' while Mowbray's last words are a clear warning that Bolingbroke must be closely watched:

But what thou art, God, thou, and I do know;
And all too soon, I fear, the king shall rue.

And the tone of Bolingbroke's comment on Richard's gesture is ominous:

How long a time lies in one little word!
Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
End in a word: such is the breath of kings.

Periphrasis, which for Richard was self-protective, is for Bolingbroke a means of subtle antagonism, since 'Four lagging winters and four wanton springs' draws out his bitter realization of Richard's capricious power. Further, 'such is the breath of kings' is a veiled perception and threat; an envious gibe at the king's authority and a recognition that the breath of a king may be cut off with a word. The perspicacity and daring of this speech, its indication of the power to use language effectively rather than take refuge behind it, are marks of the emerging usurper.

The direction of this criticism is furthered in I. iv where his ability to act a chosen role is suggested by Richard, who observed

his courtship to the common people;
How he did seem to dive into their hearts
With humble and familiar courtesy,
What reverence he did throw away on slaves,
 Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles . . .

Now Richard's account presumably shows the exaggeration of bias but its underlying truth is confirmed in the scene which records Bolingbroke's return to England (II. iii). Northumberland is sycophantic in his

tribute to the delights of Bolingbroke's companionship, yet his comment is still suggestive:

. . . your fair discourse hath been as sugar,
Making the hard way sweet and delectable.

It is a meed of sugared words that Henry Percy receives when he pledges his service to Bolingbroke:

I thank thee, gentle Percy; and be sure
I count myself in nothing else so happy
As in a soul remembering my good friends.

Ross and Willoughby, too, are greeted fulsomely:

Welcome, my lords. I wot your love pursues
A banish'd traitor: all my treasury
Is yet but unfelt thanks, which, more enrich'd,
Shall be your love and labour's recompense.

Bolingbroke is apparently humble, artless, frank. But for all the simplicity of his speeches here do they not betray calculation in their over-humility, over-sweetness? Is he not exercising that 'craft of smiles' that he had employed on the populace? Time would show. The Percys were to find to their cost what an accomplished politician they had to deal with.

Richard's comments on Bolingbroke's courtship of the people do not appear to be occasioned by apprehension of his motives. Perhaps it was an instinctive distaste, for Richard himself shows in this play little power of successful dissimulation. Even when John of Gaunt was dying he made no attempt to conceal his levity and wounded pride. Throughout it is evident that his countenance and words freely registered the truth of inner experience.

During Richard's absence in Ireland Bolingbroke returns from exile. Whether his return in arms masked from the outset a usurping design behind the ostensible demand for restitution of his rights is a much debated question, and notable viewpoints are recorded in the Appendix to the New Variorum Edition of the play. Bolingbroke certainly never admits to an ulterior motive yet all his actions, apparently justifiable, tend to an assumption of illegal power. Why return during Richard's absence? Northumberland suggests an incriminating answer to this question (II. i. 279 ff.). Bolingbroke's summary dispatch of Bushy and Green is also significant. In the first scene of his return to England he

quietly assumes royal interest and authority, referring to Bushy, Bagot and their accomplices as,

The caterpillars of the commonwealth,
Which I have sworn to weed and pluck away
(II. iii. 166)

as if England were indeed 'in reversion his'. A plausible line of defence is that Bolingbroke was carried along on a tide of events, a creature of fortune; that his usurpation was a necessary evil for the good of England. But he never explicitly sees himself in this light, never speaks altruistically of the woes of England which he is God-appointed to set to rights. We cannot regard him in the same white light as Henry Richmond or Malcolm. Even were the good of England his foremost thought, was the deposition of Richard the only way to accomplish this? Richard was not beyond the reach of a helping hand and things might have been very different if Bolingbroke had meant what he said in the crucial Flint castle scene:

Henry Bolingbroke
On both his knees doth kiss King Richard's hand
And sends allegiance and true faith of heart
To his most royal person . . .

(III. iii. 35)

The chroniclers Froissart and Holinshed unequivocally state that Bolingbroke was recalled by the enemies of Richard to seize the throne, and Samuel Daniel's account only differs in working by insinuation. If Shakespeare wished to alter this important detail from his sources why did he run the risk of misinterpretation by merely suppressing it instead of directly exonerating Bolingbroke? In the passage referred to above Northumberland's hints clearly derive from the chronicles but Shakespeare does not openly touch Bolingbroke with scandal. Was Shakespeare trying to show Bolingbroke, as Dover Wilson puts it, as 'borne upward by a power beyond his volition', or was the suppression designed to achieve the ambiguity of a politic usurper? All the clues point to the second alternative. Bolingbroke is as subtle here as in the *Henry IV* plays, and he would not have risked alienating the waverers in his faction by admitting the full truth about his aims. He had to move warily; his usurpation must appear inevitable, but undesigned.

Bolingbroke's control of his destiny is mirrored in his careful manipulation of language after his return to England. He exercises an easy art of persuasion on the simple Duke of York (II. iii. 113-36). With

winning casuistry he argues that he was banished as Duke of Hereford but returns as Duke of Lancaster. Then follows an emotional appeal, the orator's most powerful weapon:

You are my father, for methinks in you
I see old Gaunt alive: O, then, my father,
Will you permit that I shall stand condemn'd
A wandering vagabond . . .

A short logical statement is then succeeded by more emotional play, with a new twist given to the father idea:

You have a son, Aumerle, my noble cousin;
Had you first died, and he been thus trod down,
He should have found his uncle Gaunt a father,
To rouse his wrongs . . .

After a citation of his wrongs he concludes with the trump argument that he is compelled to resort to force because, although his claim is lawful, law will not help him. All is delivered with disarming plausibility and frankness. It is significant that Bolingbroke had no need to bandy words with York since the power lay in his hands to do exactly as he wished; but he was astute enough to see the value of always proceeding with an appearance of justice and injured innocence.

The growing purposiveness of the rhetoric is apparent in the scene of Richard's arrival in Wales (III. ii). Carlisle's quibbling and sententious platitudes characterize the well-meaning but ineffectual Bishop; his manner is neatly off-set by the incisive speeches of Aumerle. But the importance of this scene is its delineation of Richard's emotional unbalance and predisposition to despair which unfit him for the throne. At one extreme he is the creature of passion, but the sensuous imagination which ministers to active pleasure ministers equally to morbidity, issuing in images of death and decay. The vein of *contemptus mundi*, whether real or a perverse imaginative pleasure, ill sorts with the demands of a material kingdom. Richard's fall was as inevitable as Bolingbroke's rise—character is destiny. This pattern of rise and fall, symbolized in the 'well' image of the deposition scene, can be traced in this scene as Richard's emotions fluctuate between elation and despair. He begins with a long apostrophe to his 'Dear earth' and although the sentiments express defiance the dominant impression is of weakness, partly on account of the slow movement of the verse and partly because the pathetic fallacy, by which the earth becomes an active sympathizer, is

mere extravagance. To defend his throne his impulse is to look to the miraculous assistance of the world of nature, just as he relies upon the power of the mere name of king.

When he is reminded that his divine appointment must be guarded by determined action he simply reiterates his reliance on the terror and divinity that encompass a king. The mood is now of intransigent assertion, expressed in an elaborate allegory of the sun-king image sweeping through a verse paragraph. The conclusion is characteristically a triumph of words, drumming with alliteration:

Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm off from an annointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.

After further marked fluctuations of spirit Scroop arrives with the threat of more bad news whereupon Richard sinks into piteous resignation, a strange blend of stoicism and Christian contempt for the world. The parallel rhythms of the question and answer rhetorical device, and the strong-paused, slow-paced verse finely convey the mood:

Say, is my kingdom lost? why, 'twas my care;
And what loss is it to be rid of care?
Strives Bolingbroke to be as great as we?
Greater he shall not be: if he serve God,
We'll serve Him too, and be his fellow so:
Revolt our subjects? that we cannot mend;
They break their faith to God as well as us.

The elegiac note caught in the iterated rhythms sends one back to Henry VI on Towton field (3 *Henry VI*, II. v. 21-40) and forward a little to Richard himself at Flint Castle (III. iii. 143-54). The same means are used later in this scene:

Let's talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs;
.....
Let's choose executors and talk of wills:
.....
For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:
How some have been deposed; some slain in war;
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed;
Some poison'd by their wives . . .

(III. ii. 145)

All show conscious rhetorical means which are at once decorative and functional.

The last blow falls with the news of York's defection. When Richard addresses Aumerle,

Beshrew thee, cousin, which didst lead me forth
Of that sweet way I was in to despair!

he supplies the key to his unfitness for rule. The sweetness of the way of despair indicates both a morbid imagination and a real penchant for a rejection of the world with its active pressures and responsibilities. He was not a religious hermit *manqué* as was Shakespeare's Henry VI, yet his indolent, pleasure-loving nature would instinctively conjure up, in moments of worldly trouble, the attractiveness of an obscure religious life. Further, there was interwoven a deeper sense of the vanity of the world, certain to be present in a reflective mind. So it is that in this scene and the next he associates himself with a succession of religious images which reaches its climax in his projection of himself into a hermit's life, as he sees his deposition imminent. However, just as Richard would evade the responsibilities of the throne, so also he evades all but the superficialities of the religious life. His picturesque selection of detail—a set of beads, a dish of wood, a pair of carved saints, a little grave—is a characteristic retreat behind words.

The meeting between Richard and Bolingbroke at Flint castle (III. iii) is couched in rhetoric of considerable subtlety. In the opening dialogue between Bolingbroke, Northumberland and York devices of repetition and pun generate tension, characterize, and underline leading ideas. Bolingbroke tries to defend Northumberland to York:

Mistake not, uncle, further than you should.

The quibbling of York's reply emphasizes an important theme:

Take not, good cousin, further than you should,
Lest you mistake the heavens are o'er our heads.

Bolingbroke is too good an actor in his part of injured innocence to 'take' undisguisedly what York is implying, and the heavens are far enough away to be left for later propitiation. So he pursues his deposition of a divinely appointed king, masking his intent behind pious sentiment and blown rhetoric:

Noble lords,
Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle;
Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parley

Into his ruin'd ears, and thus deliver:
 Henry Bolingbroke
 On both his knees doth kiss King Richard's hand
 And sends allegiance and true faith of heart
 To his most royal person.

The loyalty of the last lines is denied by the personification of the ruined castle through which Bolingbroke insinuates the ruin of Richard himself ('Into his ruin'd ears'). Moreover, by means of this circumlocution and the succeeding long metaphor of the 'crimson tempest' he generates a sense of occasion which blunts one's perception of his underlying purpose. When Richard appears on the walls Henry Percy furthers the pretence by likening Richard to the sun, but however vaunting the language the whole image is suggestive of fading glory (III. iii. 62). Richard counters with equal magnificence of language, but whereas his rhetoric masks weakness (or rather is the only strength he ever shows) Bolingbroke's rhetoric is an instrument for the execution of power. Richard's words fade into the wind and he perforce acquiesces in the rebel's demands. He then attempts to sublimate grief by objectifying it in the picturesque Hermit speech (143-70). However, his anguish is not so easily assuaged, and when Northumberland requires his presence in the base court to meet Bolingbroke, he snatches up the wounding words and drives them deeper in:

Down, down I come; like glistening Phaethon,
 Wanting the manage of unruly jades.
 In the base court? Base court, where kings grow base,
 To come at traitors' calls and do them grace.
 In the base court? Come down? Down, court! down, king!
 For night-owls shriek where mounting larks should sing.

This speech catches up many threads in its imagery and punning. The dexterous patterning shows how in rhetorical tragedy 'misery makes sport to mock itself'; the quibbling emphasizes the rise and fall pattern noted earlier and draws to it the sun-king image; Bolingbroke is here significantly placed within the 'base court' while Richard's fall from power and grace is associated with the corrupting influence of a 'base court'. The whole shows the subtlety possible to the artificial linguistic mode.

At the end of this scene Bolingbroke is still making a leg and professing allegiance when it is quite clear to everyone that he is toppling over the throne. If Bolingbroke owes fealty to Richard why must Richard take orders from him?

RICHARD. Set on towards London, cousin, is it so?

BOLING. Yea, my good lord.

The tactical value of denying the crime one is evidently committing is as clearly recognized by Police State rule as it was by Machievellan politicians.

In the deposition scene the lone voice of the Bishop of Carlisle, asserting the iniquity of Bolingbroke's action, is quickly silenced. Richard must endure his misery in isolation. As he reflects upon this isolation the image of the betrayed Christ presents itself to him (IV. i. 167-71) as it does a little later when he sees those about him showing an outward pity like Pilate, but delivering him to his 'sour cross'. This religious imagery signifies not only protective self-dramatization but also a predisposition to despair leading on to a rejection of the world. Willing to relinquish the struggle for the crown he cannot, however, so easily shed the attendant grief, and the word-play which follows is the inevitable rhetorical expression of his anguish. Just as his grief hammers upon 'care' (IV. i. 195-9) so later, as he gazes in the mirror, he reiterates the word 'face' (IV. i. 277-91) which reminds him of his departed glory. This quibbling is not merely indicative of Richard's love of words and effect. The supreme flowering of the mannered style at emotional peaks may not sound natural but its intensity is the rhetorical projection of psychological intensity. The limitation of the method is that the surface brilliance tends to obscure by distraction at the same time as it strives to articulate feeling.

We have seen that Bolingbroke knows how to use words; in this scene he demonstrates his policy in not using them. He has proceeded so far behind a mask. The actual deposition is the point of dramatic unmasking and discretion bids that he should keep in the background as far as possible. Thus the ruthless and officious Northumberland is allowed prominence in the unpleasant aspects of the deposition, consequently attracting to himself some of its obloquy. When Bolingbroke does speak he is terse and carefully polite; he knows when to restrain Northumberland—'Urge it no more, my Lord Northumberland'—whose importunity threatens the desired quiet course of the deposition. He knows how to curb Richard's extravagances and in so doing gives the supreme contrast between the realist and the dreamer. When Richard smashes the mirror he admonishes Bolingbroke,

Mark, silent king, the moral of this sport,
How soon my sorrow hath destroy'd my face.

Bolingbroke at once turns the argument back on Richard with an unerring eye for the reality of the situation:

The shadow of your sorrow hath destroy'd
The shadow of your face.

Richard's protective language is pierced with logic; he faces his misery:

'Tis very true, my grief lies all within.

When we meet Richard in Pomfret castle he still faces his grief but mercifully there is no Bolingbroke present to shatter the fancies of Richard's last attempt to beguile sorrow with words.

Bolingbroke has it all. He must now exercise his politic art in consolidating his position. Sir Pierce of Exton was the first of the accomplices to suffer from his calculated hypocrisy.

York's detailed description of the arrival of King Richard and Bolingbroke in London (V. ii. 7-36) inevitably brings to mind Richard's earlier account of ostentatious humility:

Whilst he, from the one side to the other turning,
Bare-headed, lower than his proud steed's neck,
Bespake them thus: 'I thank you, countrymen'.

York then uses a simile from the theatre in which Bolingbroke is likened to a 'well-graced actor'. Certainly a decorative simile but remarkably appropriate to both the immediate situation and an underlying truth. It is, indeed, the 'well-graced actor' in Bolingbroke which ensures his rise to power and subsequent strength. Can anyone who has observed him closely as pretender and king accept at its face value his self-righteous rebuke of Exton?

They love not poison that do poison need,
Nor do I thee: though I did wish him dead,
I hate the murderer, love him murdered.

(V. vi. 38)

No one better than Bolingbroke can act the part that policy requires and in this special sense I call him the actor-king. His command of language issues in effective action whereas Richard's stagnates in reflection. Richard is only an actor in that he is prone to the weakness of self-dramatization.

Bolingbroke apparently justifies his usurpation in that he shows himself admirably fitted for rule. Yet morally he is an equivocal figure. Indeed, *Richard II* is curiously ambiguous in its ethical attitude towards

both Bolingbroke and Richard. Neither is presented as an evil figure so that it is difficult to adjust oneself to the moral and religious issues involved in the conflict. Perhaps one should not ask what was Shakespeare's attitude since he was dramatizing historical events with an intractable dilemma at their core—political expediency versus divine right. Yet speculation may throw some oblique light.

Shakespeare's tragic heroes, heroines, villains, clowns, wits, form groups with distinct characteristics. My impulse is to place Bolingbroke with the villains and Richard with the heroes. Rationalization of this impulse discerns that Bolingbroke shares with Richard III, Cassius, Claudius, Lady Macbeth, Edmund, Goneril, Regan, Iago, the Tribunes in *Coriolanus*, an essentially practical nature, combined with powers of dissimulation employed in the attainment of selfish ends. There is usually great self-control itself related to a coldness of nature which may interest itself in lust but knows nothing of the generousities of love. The imaginative and reflective part of man is in abeyance, together with a freedom from moral and religious impulsions, so that the numinous quality is entirely lacking. This 'villainous' generalization stands whatever qualifications apply in individual cases.

Richard, on the other hand, whilst lacking the moral fibre of Shakespeare's tragic heroes and good characters, is like them in the general tendencies of his nature. In morals he is an absolutist; he may do wrong things wilfully or irresponsibly but he does not confound right and wrong with sophistry and expediency. Being of an impractical, contemplative bent he is an easy prey of the worldly wise; the more so in that he is little skilled in the hypocritical arts essential in some degree to any worldly success. Imaginative, reflective, he soon loses grip of the actuality and demands of an immediate situation. He has a warm, impulsive nature though he faults in his over-indulgence of feeling. Above all things he has an open rather than a close personality. In thus characterizing Richard, I have sketched the essential common nature of Shakespeare's tragic heroes and good men—with the reservation that in Richard potential worth is vitiated by weakness.

Yeats wrote, 'I cannot believe that Shakespeare looked on his Richard II with any but sympathetic eyes', a view consonant with the above placing of Richard. Since Bolingbroke is strong and successful there may be truth in John Bailey's assertion that 'there is no audience from his [Shakespeare's] day to ours which has not instantly and instinctively worshipped Henry and pitied Richard'. But I cannot believe that Shakespeare worshipped him as a man though he may have

shown. Dear place. Not with me

recognized his value as the type of successful ruler. Shakespeare was consistent in his distaste for 'the pregnant hinges of the knee' and for 'that glib and oily art to speak and purpose not'. Coriolanus would have been a happier man (and a better ruler) could he, like the rest of the patricians, have dissimulated his true feelings for the populace. He would also have lost the stature of tragic hero. It is the persistent Shakespearian thought of integrity versus expediency, and Shakespeare was an absolutist however clearly he saw the necessity of expediency in the world's affairs.

It is consistent with the closeness of Bolingbroke that he never soliloquizes in this play, while Richard lays bare his thoughts in soliloquy and quasi-soliloquy. And Bolingbroke's one soliloquy in the *Henry IV* plays, the apostrophe to sleep, merely confirms what one suspects of his troubled conscience; he does not admit the cause. Now, whether or not one is prepared to see Bolingbroke as a villain in his usurpation, it is certain that he is a schemer. As a schemer who does not soliloquize he stands alone among the villains and schemers of the early plays. One effect of such soliloquies, in which the audience is taken into the villain's confidence, is the creation of dramatic irony. Another effect is that the intrigue, however clever in fact, appears simple, even naïve; this impression envelopes the intriguer so that he appears transparent, a simple villain. Because he has allowed us to see into his mind we know its depth exactly. Richard III, for all his brilliance, is deep only to his enemies not to us.

We cannot chart Bolingbroke's mind. Its silent workings are never glimpsed in soliloquy and little is revealed in public for Bolingbroke never discusses his affairs with his associates. That Shakespeare should thus eschew soliloquy for a special portraiture is a particular instance of the general control of soliloquy in this play. *Richard II* is unusual in having only one soliloquy, for in the other early plays, and indeed in plays up to *Hamlet* at least, Shakespeare makes free with this handy convention. Apart from its obvious use in conveying to the audience secret thoughts and intentions, the soliloquy is also given choric, prophetic, thematic functions. In addition it is a simple means of conveying information about character and action; it may be effective for heightening suspense, as in the soliloquies of Juliet; it may be used as a comic set-piece; it may provide a shorthand method of relating changes of heart, as in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Since the soliloquy is an accepted convention, one among others in Elizabethan drama, one cannot quarrel with Shakespeare's frequent resort to the convenience. Provided that it attunes us to the essentials of the action, or clears the way for their bold

presentation, there is no cause for complaint. Nevertheless, with the exception of the soliloquies of Juliet, its various functions as detailed above may be described as dramatically convenient rather than as inevitable. They are functions which could be performed by other dramatic means, without recourse to soliloquy.

Now there is another kind of soliloquizing which is not talking to the audience but a kind of talking to oneself. And one normally talks to oneself alone. Hence such soliloquies may be called inevitable or 'natural'. Furthermore, since such thinking aloud is, on a serious plane, evidence of considerable inner unrest, its apparent naturalness will increase in proportion to the degree of causal unrest. Such inner pressures may be articulated through other dramatic means but the soliloquy is the most effective. It emphasizes the isolation of the speaker with his problem; our awareness of conflict is intensified in that we see it working in a mind alone and unstimulated.

Such 'natural', deep-sounding soliloquies presuppose a corresponding depth and largeness of character; they also presuppose drama whose essential action is inward rather than outward, where interest is centred upon private as opposed to public questions. The 'natural' soliloquy is ill-nourished in the *Henry VI* plays and in *Richard III* where a variety of surface excitement engages one's attention. *Richard II*, too, has its surface excitement of language and its public question of the ethics of kingship. None the less, it concentrates its action closely about the fall of a king, a man presented with sufficient inner life to engage interest in the agonizing pressures which attend his fall. Add to this his reflective nature, and the 'natural' soliloquy becomes inevitable; Shakespeare gives us the soliloquy in Pomfret castle.

However, if the dungeon soliloquy looks forward to *Hamlet* in its reflectiveness and release of inner pressures it betrays early composition in its obtrusive rhetoric. Zest for the artifices of language here imperils the successful communication of tragic experience. Comedy can, and often does, work in and through artificiality and we are in no way disturbed by the detachment of the writer which this artificiality presupposes, for comedy usually exacts an objective view on the part of both writer and audience. Comedy is make-believe and the audience holds a position of amused superiority. Tragedy is deadly earnest and its success depends upon a degree of audience involvement. The emotions of pity and fear, even within the aesthetic experience, are disturbing, if not actually painful, and are therefore not likely to be aroused in an audience which remains detached from the tragic action. And the audience will

remain detached if it senses that its feelings are being practised upon with artificiality or dispassion. Thus the submission of the audience to tragic experience will only occur when the dramatist himself appears to be lost in that experience, and when the tragic character is lost in his tragic situation, to the exclusion of other interests. If the dramatist can sidetrack into self-conscious verbal display, if the tragic character can speculate upon his situation with calculated eloquence, then the audience senses an emotional failure, detachment, and remains detached also. It is significant that Shakespeare's early mannered style is more successful in comedy than in tragedy.

Helen Gardner justly comments that Richard II 'occupies himself in prison composing a conceited poem'. The first half (lines 1-41) consists of a regular amplification of the proposition made in the opening lines, which concludes in neat word-play:

but whate'er I be,
Nor I nor any man that but man is
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing.

At this point the sound of music leads him into sententious reflections upon 'time' and by a series of quibbles on the word he arrives at an elaborate allegory of himself as a clock. This second section is, like the first, brought to a studied conclusion on the right pathetic, self-pitying note:

and love to Richard
Is a strange brooch in this all-hating world.

As a piece of consciously beautiful writing to mark a climax of feeling this soliloquy is in accord with the manner of rhetorical tragedy. Functionally it is successful to the extent that it furthers the characterization of a man who is prone to self-dramatization, one who endeavours to elude the immediate experience by enclosing it in a cage of words. It fails, however, in tragic impact. It has the content of a tragic meditation, for Richard speaks of his past folly and present misery. But he does not make us feel them. The necessary urgency of language is smoothed away in the controlled patterns of statement. Richard has made such an intricate cage of words that we look at that instead of at the sorrow it encloses. Further, the surface control is such that Richard appears detached and with his detachment comes ours.

That Shakespeare intended us to remain detached from Richard in his last hour is unlikely. Richard's soliloquy was the opportunity for the

soul-searchings of a tragic figure; it was also, unfortunately, the opportunity for a virtuoso set-piece of which an Elizabethan wit might be proud. And Shakespeare had his rhetoric ready at his tongue's end.

This is even more apparent in an earlier soliloquy, which makes a useful comparison with Richard's. Henry VI, having retired from the thick of battle, soliloquizes first upon the uncertainty of the battle's issue and then upon the comparative merits of troubled greatness and peaceful lowliness (3 *Henry VI*, II. v. 1-54). The first theme is illustrated through two similes:

This battle fares like to the morning's war,
When dying clouds contend with growing light,
What time the shepherd, blowing of his nails,
Can neither call it perfect day nor night.
Now sways it this way, like a mighty sea
Forced by the tide to combat with the wind;
Now sways it that way, like the self-same sea
Forced to retire by fury of the wind:
Sometime the flood prevails, and then the wind;
Now one the better, then another best;
Both tugging to be victors, breast to breast,
Yet neither conqueror nor conquered:
So is the equal poise of this fell war.

The point of comparison in the first simile is weak since clouds and light do not actively *contend* as do the opposing forces in battle. Besides, the morning light must inevitably 'conquer' the clouds whereas the line of Henry's thought about the battle is the uncertainty as to the victor. The touch of the shepherd 'blowing of his nails' suggests an absorption in the prettiness of the simile rather than in the point of comparison. The second simile is more apt, but again is pursued to the point where the picture of the wind and sea fighting 'breast to breast' is so captivating as to obscure the starting point of the comparison until we are jerked back with,

So is the equal poise of this fell war.

The second theme is treated through traditional amplification by a division of the subject matter into parts with the aim of copiousness. Unfortunately so fine a thread of verbosity does Shakespeare spin out from the staple of his argument that the emotion which set it at work is dissipated. The words are so curiously chosen, so carefully patterned, that we cannot resist the surface attention which they invite.

This soliloquy is not an unqualified failure. Its wistful strain well accords with Henry's other-worldly nature; the repetitive structure produces the slow tempo of sorrow and suggests the enviable unchangeableness of the shepherd's life. Emotionally, however, it is light-weight. Henry's plight is tragic:

Would I were dead! if God's good will were so;
For what is in this world but grief and woe?

but Shakespeare does not reach the expected inwardness. The language springs not from a hot imaginative centre, but is apparently organized dispassionately.

In indicating the limitations of the decorative manner I am not suggesting that Shakespeare experienced Henry and Richard as he experienced Hamlet and Lear, failing only in articulation because of his linguistic means. It is possible that over-excitement about means may have checked an early development of that inwardness of experience felt in the plays of Shakespeare's maturity; it is equally likely that attention to language for its own sake was itself symptomatic of a thinness of tragic experience. This much is certain. Where Shakespeare transmits intense feeling his means are not obtrusive. Not only are the means refined but, as Longinus has taught, passion validates the splendours of the elevated style.

In the night before the battle of Agincourt Henry V soliloquizes upon Henry VI's theme of peaceful lowness and troubled greatness (IV. i. 250). The meditation is highly figurative and figured; it achieves copiousness by the usual devices of repetition and the division of subject matter into its detailed parts:

And what art thou, thou idol ceremony?
What kind of god art thou, that suffer'st more
Of mortal griefs than do thy worshippers?
What are thy rents? what are thy comings in?
O ceremony! show me but thy worth!
What is thy soul of adoration?
Art thou aught else but place, degree, and form,
Creating awe and fear in other men?
Wherein thou art less happy being fear'd
Than they in fearing.

.....
'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball,
The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
The intertissued robe . . .

It is a piece of high rhetoric. Yet in listening one is more aware of the generating passion than of the mere verbal splendour. How does Shakespeare succeed with the rhetorical means which failed him earlier? In the first place this soliloquy rises out of a current of strong feeling which has been set working in Henry's immediately preceding conversation with his soldiers. This link with a continuum of feeling is important, for without it a soliloquy runs the risk of appearing as an isolated set-piece of generalized reflection. This is partly the trouble with the soliloquies of Henry VI and Richard II, and is certainly true of Henry IV's soliloquy on sleep.

Secondly, the structural devices of repetition are so broken up and varied that the effect is of a man thinking excitedly, and repeating himself variously as his feeling strives for emphasis. In the passage quoted above the repeated questions are varied as to length and rhythm thus expressing urgency without hardening into a formal pattern. This softening of the stiff rhythms imposed by rhetorical devices formally used is part of a general flexibility which can blend the dramatic, the prosaic, the poetic. It can swing from 'the tide of pomp That beats upon the high shore of this world' to the lackey who 'Sweats in the eye of Phoebus'.

Thirdly, the imagery is forceful and succinct, conditioned by the urge to express. Where a thought is varied it is in the interests of vehemence, not decoration:

Think'st thou the fiery fever will go out
With titles blown from adulation?
Will it give place to flexure and low bending?
Canst thou, when thou command'st the beggar's knee,
Command the health of it?

In short, the rhetorical devices are being employed as a means to an end, not as an end in themselves. Urgency of felt experience breaks down the set patterns, and as the rhetorical means are refined the soliloquy takes on the character of spontaneous utterance. Immediacy of feeling compels attention so that the magnificence of language falls into proper place as an imaginative stimulant co-operating subtly in the total meaning.

This last point is important. In the early high style the language asked to be admired to a degree detrimental to the primary functions of meaning. As Shakespeare matured this balance of emphasis was not entirely reversed, for our wonder at the language of *Hamlet* is not restricted to

a recognition of its justness as a plain vehicle of meaning. It is a very beautiful thing whose colours and modulations can excite admiration for their own sakes; wonder at the language remains part of the pleasure of Shakespeare's great tragedies. The difference is that as we experience these plays the wonder blends with the total apprehension of human nobility and degradation.

Although Shakespeare smiled at the much art and little matter of Polonius he had been similarly at fault in his early writing. A study of *Richard II* can find only a qualified achievement in the consciously artificial manner. The qualification vanishes as the rhetoric is transmuted in the process of a deepening experience of life. The eloquence of Hamlet's soliloquies is a schooling of the old copiousness, and their distinction reaches back to the figures of rhetoric.

Note

First Editions. A 'bad', reported text was printed as 'An Excellent conceited Tragedie of Romeo and Juliet. As it hath been often (with great applause) plaid publicquely, by the right Honourable the Lord of Hunsdon his Servants. . . . Printed by John Danter. 1597'; and a 'good' text, derived from Shakespeare's autograph 'foul papers', as 'The Most Excellent and lamentable Tragedie, of Romeo and Juliet . . . As it hath bene sundry times publicquely acted by the right Honourable the Lord Chamberlaine his Servants . . . Printed by Thomas Creede . . . 1599.'

Modern Editions. The most recent authoritative editions, with notes, are the New Cambridge, by G. I. Duthie and J. D. Wilson (1955), and the Yale, by R. Hosley (1954). H. Furness' Variorum Edition (1899) is a full guide to editions and scholarship up to that time.

A *Shakespeare Quarto Facsimile* of the second, or 'good', quarto was published in 1949.

Scholarship and Criticism. Recent books on Shakespeare's tragedies which consider *Romeo* are H. B. Charlton, *Shakespearian Tragedy* (1948); H. S. Wilson, *On the Design of Shakespearian Tragedy* (1957); I. Ribner, *Patterns in Shakespearian Tragedy* (1960). Charlton's *British Academy Shakespeare Lecture* (1939), on 'Romeo and Juliet as an Experimental Tragedy', should also be consulted; K. Muir's *Lecture* (1958) in the same series, on 'Shakespeare and the Tragic Pattern', is a stimulating, wide-ranging survey.

W. E. Farnham's *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (1936; 2nd, 1956) is important for the medieval aspects of *Romeo*; a good general book on Boethius is Helen M. Barrett's *Boethius, some aspects of his times and work* (1940); a more specialized one is H. R. Patch, *The Tradition of Boethius* (1935).

D. Stauffer's *Shakespeare's World of Images* (1949) and M. M. Mahood's *Shakespeare's Wordplay* (1957) are especially useful for a study of *Romeo*.

A theatrical study worth consulting is H. Granville-Barker's 'Preface' to this play in *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, series ii (1930), and scholarly ones are G. A. Bonnard's 'Romeo and Juliet: a possible significance?', in *Review of English Studies* (1951) and J. W. Draper's 'Shakespeare's "Star-crossed Lovers"', in the same *Review* (1939).

G. Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, i (1957) reprints Brooke's *Tragicall Historie*, and considers Shakespeare's use of this source.

VI

'*Romeo and Juliet*'

JOHN LAWLOR



It is perhaps impossible to approach any play of Shakespeare's without strong, if latent, preconception; and this may be especially so with his first major incursion into tragedy. *Romeo and Juliet* is not Shakespeare's first attempt at tragic writing; but it is the first of his plays to excite and sustain any deep concern with humanity in the ills that befall it. This concern, however, it appears to be generally held, is other than that evoked by later tragedies; and since in them we have an insistent probing of the connections between what men are and what may befall them, it is easy to make a distinction between the tragedy of fortune and the tragedy of character; and, referring the first to a medieval inheritance, find in *Romeo and Juliet* an experiment, in greater or less degree unsuccessful, towards a second and greater mode. It is in these terms that G. I. Duthie, an editor of the *New Cambridge Shakespeare*, introduces the play. The feud between Montague and Capulet is 'quite unconvincing'; Fate is thus 'nothing more important than a matter of sheer bad luck'; and the protagonists have 'weaknesses of character' (principally a lack of 'mature poise and balance') which are yet not related to their doom. In this Duthie follows two principal critics, H. Charlton in the first point and D. Stauffer in the second. 'What we actually have then,' he concludes, 'is a drama of Fate involving the destruction of two innocent victims who have defects of character which are not properly worked into the pattern.' Unless we follow J. W. Draper in his belief that these lovers are literally 'star-cross'd' (so that the play illustrates astrological determinism), it is difficult to see where any 'system or governing purpose' may lie. *Romeo and Juliet* may yet appear to be saved by its poetry: Shakespeare, though lacking a true 'grasp of the foundations of tragedy' (Charlton) is 'totally successful' in expressing the triumph of a love over which 'Death has no power' (Duthie). It is a fair expression of the majority view: the dramatist has failed 'to convey a certain great tragic conception (which points forward to his maturity)'; and Duthie

localizes that failure in an imperfect relation between the story of the two lovers, as embodying 'a certain well-known traditional conception of tragedy', and the story of the two families which prompts 'quite another conception of tragedy—a more deeply satisfying conception'. Much, evidently, depends on certain assumptions about the tragic. It will be best to begin with the 'traditional conception' inherited by the Elizabethan.

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Medieval tragedy—it may make for clarity if it is called hereafter *tragedie*—is perhaps more often understood in terms of its characteristic working than its final effect. It is as though criticism of the more familiar kind of tragedy were to fasten wholly upon its mechanism—the 'passions' that 'spin the plot'—and ignore its distinctive effect upon the spectator. That effect is one in which apparent opposites are reconciled; a balance is struck between pity and terror, the logic of events and whatever we may mean by an inscrutable Fate—'the necessary' as opposed to 'the probable'. There is an end of any merely mechanistic notion (a quasi-causal relation between what men are and what may befall them) and, at the same time, of a wholly inscrutable Fate. It is a dual perception, affirming a system as finally mysterious while revealing it in part of its ordered working. Against this, *tragedie* is, from one point of view, less complex; it calls forth no dual perception, for it needs none. Its central truth is that Fortune knows nothing of human deserving. But her activities are not, in the end, inscrutable; for those who are minded to learn, a greater good is in prospect. Similarly, on the level of 'plot'—the sequence of events in the external world—*tragedie* may be said to have beginning and end, but no distinctive middle. The beginning is in 'prosperitee', a happiness unshadowed by imminent reversal; the end in apparent disaster, as unalterable as unpredictable. The formula, then, is simple; but the experience available to us in these terms is a more complex matter. It is certainly not 'profoundly pessimistic', as Duthie, following a general persuasion, would have us believe. Fortune's 'delight' in her operations is the illusion of the sufferer, clinging to his belief in a retributive justice and protesting, like Chaucer's Troilus, 'I have it nat deserved'. Certainly, where the dominant type of tragic writing strongly asserts connection between 'character' and calamity, then what apparently runs counter to this will seem merely arbitrary:

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods—
They kill us for their sport.

But it is in fact this universal misunderstanding of Fortune's operations which *tragedie* exists to challenge, and to alter. When disaster has come in *tragedie*, we find man lamenting as uncovenanted the harm that has befallen him. Fortune's operations are thus, as they were in the archetype, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, a manifest cruelty: *satis eminet fortunae in nos saevientis asperitas*. But the tragic design puts a period to fruitless lament: we may rise to an understanding that

All is best, though we oft doubt,
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.

The 'close' of *tragedie* enables the spectator to look beyond a limited time of inexplicable suffering to a happiness beyond time's reach. In the close, we, like Troilus, repair 'home'; another dimension of time, an eternal present, is entered upon in *tragedie*, as it was in Boethius's philosophical questioning of Divine foreknowledge and free will.

We may trace this characteristic progress of the spectator in Dante's inquiry concerning Fortune, the first of a series of major discourses in which 'the plan of the spiritual and physical universe', as the medieval mind apprehended it, is unfolded.¹ Dante must learn that she is reviled who ought to be praised; but, being in bliss, she hears it not (*Ma ella s'è beata, e ciò non ode*). His approach had been to her as having the good things of the world in her control (*che i ben del mondo ha sì tra branche*). It is the typical standpoint of mortals; and as such it calls forth a general rebuke upon foolish and ignorant humanity (*O creature sciocche, quanta ignoranza è quella che vi offende!*). The argument must take us beyond possessions, the creature-comforts and empty 'goods' of this life (*li ben vani*). Fortune, the presiding intelligence of our sphere, has her task allotted from on high; and she conducts her operations 'beyond the hindrance of human wisdom' (*oltre la difension de' senni umani*). In the close of *tragedie* we see, as Boethius saw at the end of a long and hard road, that things are not what they seemed at the outset. The spectator, beholding the tragic sufferer, attains to that insight which, in its fullness, is the Divine prerogative: *Manet etiam spectator desuper cunctorum* . . . The aerial ascent of Troilus's spirit in the close of Chaucer's poem is appropriate to this order of exalted vision. It is the definitive experience of *tragedie*, corresponding to the *katharsis* of nemesis-type tragedy. Where such tragedy returns us to the real world, *tragedie* takes us beyond it. The

¹ *Inferno*, vii. 67-96; the comment is that of Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Comedy of Dante*, . . . *Cantica I, Hell* (1949), p. 115.

important consideration is that the one is not an imperfect form of the other; where causal connection interests the Greek, what absorbs the medieval mind is the absence of a rationale in any terms less than an unsearchable Divine wisdom. Refused all proximate solutions, we must confront man as the patient of forces beyond his control. Through lesser disasters we are drawn to a greater good; and this, so far from being pessimistic, can touch the deeps of happiness—the landfall long postponed, and lately despaired of, is at last in view. Our final perspective may even offer the wry comedy of wilful blindness and thus a painful journeying. Like Boethius we may observe man's erratic progress towards the greatest good, stumbling to it like a drunken man who knows not the way home (*velut ebrius domum quo tramite revertatur ignorat*). We shall go very far astray if we think of the 'tragedy of fortune' as pessimistic in giving an apparent victory to Death. Its distinctive capacity is in fact the awakening to understanding of a greater good. Not all the feeble *exempla* of mere reversal, the turning of her wheel by the strumpet Fortune, should distract us from this distinctive capacity of *tragedie* in the hands of a master-poet. In Chaucer it is *Troilus and Criseyde* we attend to, not the Monk's Tale.

A stereotype of cruel Fortune is, of course, abundantly evident in later medieval and Elizabethan 'tragic' writing, and it constitutes the central image of that 'Gothic' tragedy which W. E. Farnham soundly contrasts with the Greek in its unwillingness 'to confine its scope to the action that immediately brings catastrophe' (p. 451). There are two major reactions to this notion of cruel Fortune's sway. The first is a strongly moral protest, asserting the superiority of Virtue over Fortune. Thus, in George Wither's *Emblemes* we see not only the strumpet Fortune but Zeus hastening to the captive's aid, the whole set within the encouraging legend *Sors non obest Virtuti*—

*Though Fortune prove true Vertues Foe,
It cannot worke her Overthrowe.*²

This is to resolve the matter by pronouncement: certainly virtue itself may not be overthrown; but all else may be. More timorous spirits may appeal for protection against Fortune. Only the gods can,

In general synod, take away her power;
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,

² The plate is conveniently accessible in A. Gilbert, *The Principles and Practice of Criticism* (1959), p. 115.

And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
As low as to the fiends.

It is precisely because Shakespeare wishes us to feel Hamlet's destiny as mysterious that the image of implacable Fortune is given over to ridicule in these earnest histrionics of the First Player. The centre of attention in any serious drama must be the over-burdened human figure who is yet an *agent*. In Elizabethan terms this must mean one who achieves an end which does not minimize, much less cancel, Fortune's power, but which denies her an entire victory. That Death has no final power over the lovers of *Romeo and Juliet* is therefore not 'an impression' differing from 'the tragic design that Shakespeare obviously intended to produce' (Duthie). Whatever may be discoverable about Shakespeare's intentions, it is wholly consistent with *tragedie* that out of evil comes not good merely but a greater good. What we see in the close of *Romeo and Juliet* is not simply a renewal of a pattern disturbed, but its re-ordering; life is not continued merely; it is regenerated. Only thus do we experience the quality of a 'Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear'. It is earth, the realm of Fortune, that is the loser. We see it as 'unworthy' of the lovers, a world of 'less generous passions' (Bullough, p. 277); so this love is placed, fittingly, at once beyond reach and beyond change. Shakespeare, in this at least, has not broken with but rather has reaffirmed the distinctive quality of *tragedie*. But is this perhaps at the cost of 'a more deeply satisfying conception' of tragedy? To answer that question we must begin by considering the tragic plays written before *Romeo and Juliet*.

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Titus Andronicus is Shakespeare's first essay in tragic writing; and it portrays a conscious and purposeful evil. Aaron the Moor knows himself evil and delights in the knowledge. What is noteworthy is that this evil overflows into a spontaneous mischief: if at one end of the scale it embraces 'murders, rapes, and massacres', at the other it includes burning hay-stacks and luring cattle to their destruction:

Make poor men's cattle break their necks;
Set fire on barns and hay-stacks in the night,
And bid the owners quench them with their tears.

(V. i. 132)

These offences, too, it appears, must be itemized in a general confession of 'Acts of black night, abominable deeds'. It is as though the conscious

agent of evil is a figure releasing in the Shakespearian imagination associations of diabolical enmity to man—an enmity which includes impish irresponsibility as well as more lurid disasters. The forest of II. iii and iv is a region of darkly unlimited possibility; and here type and antitype seem very close if we compare the horrors of *Titus Andronicus* with the perils safely overpassed of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Shakespeare's art in each play is to place between the spectator and the dire or fantastic events of the stage a *cordon sanitaire*; and this effect in *Titus Andronicus* is reinforced by its rhetoric, an oratory which, as K. Muir remarks, 'acts as a shield between the horrors and our hearts' (p. 147). In *Richard III* we are again concerned with the conscious agent of evil; and here the popular tradition of a murderous Machiavel relieves the dramatist of any necessity for subtle characterization. We concentrate upon a progress to the Crown which cuts down all in its path. But here, again, we may see in the dramatist's working imagination something which is distinctive. The barrenness that Richard makes around him is, in the end, realized in wholly individual terms. The lament for the absence of friends may come 'too late to humanize an essentially melodramatic character' (Muir, p. 148): but in the self-knowledge that accepts this exclusion—

I myself
Find in myself no pity to myself—
(V. iii. 202)

the circle of 'Richard loves Richard' is fatally complete. Richard's punishment is to have achieved his aim; he is, unmistakably and finally, alone. These two treatments of the conscious agent of evil express the same truth. If the evil-doer is not, like Aaron, outrageously immune to all self-reproach, he must be finally subject to the knowledge that his success, the fulfilment of his original aims, is a total failure in human terms. Cut off, excluded, cast out—this is the final predicament of the one who wills the world of 'I am I'; and his punishment is to know that this is unalterably so.

With *Richard II* we turn from conscious evil to unconscious weakness; and with this shift there comes an access of creative power. As Muir has pointed out, Shakespeare had learnt from Marlowe 'the trick of concentrating on his hero's weakness and vice before his downfall, and on his better qualities afterwards' (p. 148). This allows the dramatist to make a skilful balance of sympathy, between insurrection against misgovernment and the sin of usurpation. It is a kind of hindsight which perfectly corresponds with real experience. Once impatience and anger are dis-

charged in action, there inevitably arise not only feelings of revulsion and pity but also a new understanding of the victim. We may remember Macbeth's soliloquy before the intended murder of a wholly virtuous ruler: Duncan's death is certain to awaken realization of his virtues, a realization new-born with pity. A similar understanding grows for a Richard who survives to be the spectator of his own deposition. The design of the play—'the disposition of the fable'—thus corresponds with the actual movement of the audience's feelings; and it answers to the greater change, a shift from the hero as conscious agent of evil to the hero as unwitting author of his own undoing. The important consideration is not that the disasters which come upon Richard are ultimately attributable to his 'character'. The dramatist's real opportunity occurs when the progress of the play is not to convict the hero of failure by the manifest ruin of his plans, but when failure receives the hero's full assent as an unalterable human lot. Richard, certainly, has a wisdom after the event; but it lies in the recognition of an even-handed justice ('I wasted time, and now doth time waste me') and a steady refusal of the fiction that man can unmake himself. It is easy to recognize and allow that 'sweet' must turn to 'sour' 'When time is broke and no proportion kept'. But what shall we say of failure to know the self? The focus of Richard's understanding is upon man as the subject of illusion:

here have I the daintiness of ear
To check time broke in a disorder'd string;
But for the concord of my state and time
Had not an ear to hear my true time broke.
(V. v. 45)

It is a momentous step. In such a play there is ample room for one obvious appeal of *tragedie*: the fall of a prince mirrors the uncertainty of this world's estate. But Richard's conclusion upon the matter deepens, the conception of *tragedie*. We see the human condition as unchangings incurable of illusion while life lasts:

whate'er I be,
Nor I nor any man that but man is,
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing.
(V. v. 38)

The development in *Richard II* is not away from *tragedie*, but rather to take that fulfilment of design which *tragedie* characteristically emphasizes,

the recognition of a greater good, out of the region of dramatic fiction, placing it beyond the bounds of life. The tragic fable must work to the 'easing' of man by his 'being nothing' before we can speak of a greater good. Here we have perhaps a reason why when the old story of Leir comes to be retold it must drive beyond the truth of 'unaccommodated man' to the nothingness of death. At all events, we may see from these early tragic plays that the conscious agent of evil is touched with melodrama; the unwitting author of his own undoing is invested with dignity and his death has a sacrificial quality. It is with this experience behind him that Shakespeare comes to the making of *Romeo and Juliet*: in this light we may examine its alleged shortcomings.

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The feud between Montague and Capulet is certainly introduced to us in undignified terms. Parallel with the vulgar delight of a serving-man in his master's quarrel is the senile eagerness of Capulet calling for his 'long sword', testily answered by his wife, 'A crutch, a crutch!' 'Old Montague', we are told, 'flourishes his blade in spite of me'. It is the very language of childish pique; and the foolishness of the whole proceeding is appropriately berated by the Prince. 'Verona's ancient citizens' have been made to

Cast by their grave beseeeming ornaments,
To wield old partisans, in hands as old.

(I. i. 100)

The note of absurdity is common in references to the old men of the play. But before the feud itself is dismissed as 'all . . . rather trivial, rather silly' (Duthie, p. xxix) we must place it in its full setting. There is not only the commonplace brawling of the servants and the undignified caperings of the old men; there is also Tybalt's grim acceptance of the feud, and Mercutio's valiantly embracing it. We shall refer to the play of coincidence below; for the moment, the bearing of the feud on 'Fate' calls for some consideration. Romeo, we see, is placed in a world of untroubled assumptions; and it is these which, defining his situation, become the unalterable constraints upon him when he would pass beyond them. Thus, as to the point of honour, the behaviour expected of a young Montague, Romeo stands between the murderous Tybalt and the chivalrous Mercutio. It is a situation like that of Hamlet, opposed to the unhesitating vengefulness of Laertes, and put to shame at the sight of the honourable Fortinbras, whose example teaches what it is 'Rightly to be

great'. At the turning-point for Romeo—as for Hamlet—the revenge code exacts obedience. But it is important not to mistake the desperate quality of Romeo's action. It is certainly not the dignified self-possession which we could infer from some critical accounts:

Alive, in triumph! and Mercutio slain!
 Away to heaven, respective lenity,
 And fire-eyed fury be my conduct now!
 (III. i. 127)

This is the language of an avenger; one step more and it will be like Laertes's italianate defiance:

To hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil! . . .
 I dare damnation.

(*Hamlet*, IV. v. 131-3)

Romeo's is an honourable part, in taking it upon himself to requite a death incurred on his behalf. But the hot blood cannot be gainsaid; the rant of the revenge theme, though made appropriate to an honourable avenger, is still in sharpest contrast to the mild speech of the first encounter between Romeo and Tybalt; and now Romeo takes occasion to requite the insult ('villain') he had himself received. Romeo is indeed 'Fortune's fool'; as his love for Juliet had raised him to a height far above 'respective lenity' (Capulet had been a name to tender as dearly as his own) so now he sinks—not to the level merely of the revenge-code, but to an offence against the Prince's law, a 'bandying in Verona streets'. Shakespeare has certainly made the feud undignified; but we must not miss the real point of its being so. After the first scene, with the Prince's angry intervention, 'honourable' courses can mean only public brawling. To say that Romeo disposes of Tybalt 'in the name of all that is manly and honest'³ is to ignore the higher understanding that had come to Romeo; and this, too, we must observe in its full setting.

The love which prompts this understanding in Romeo is a new thing in the world of the play. It differs, most obviously, from his own conventional passion for Rosaline and from Mercutio's light-hearted sensuality. But it differs, too, from everything else we see in Verona where 'love' is in question—from the attitudes of a masterful father; a match-making mother; a match-approving and therefore variable Nurse; a managing Friar, concerned to minimize risk and promote reconciliation; even—perhaps most of all—from the affections of a simple and

³ P. Alexander, *A Shakespeare Primer* (1951), p. 92.

likeable suitor, Paris. Every commentator has noticed that Shakespeare's Juliet is even younger than the Juliet of Brooke's poem. If we are to speak of maturity and immaturity, we must not fail to notice the decisive turning, in both Romeo and Juliet, away from the 'mature' viewpoints of all around them, to a new thing. The point of characterization will concern us below: for the moment, we must observe that whatever may be said of the opposition of the stars, the Fate which 'so enviously debars' this love is plainly evident in a world where love is known to the bystanders as many things—all different from the experience of love as we see it in the two central figures. In this respect at least *Romeo and Juliet* is true to a cardinal principle of Shakespearian drama—it might almost be called the authenticating mark of his authorship. Whatever is profoundly true (true in that mystery of things which the drama in part reveals) is always literally true, true in terms of unalterable human disposition. It is not merely that the one answers as a deeper echo to the other, the operations of a mysterious Fate giving an authoritative significance to mortal acts and entanglements. It is rather that, seeing more clearly into humanity we perceive both its unchanging limits and its incalculable possibilities; so that Fate and Chance become significant terms.

To this end, an initial 'immaturity' in the lovers is essential. In both we meet youth on the hither side of experience; and in Romeo, entirely subject to a hopeless love, we may see the false maturity in which all youthful inexperience would hide itself. Certainly, when we have heard his declaration of woeful love ('Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms') we can echo his declaration: 'This is not Romeo, he's some other where' (I. i. 204). But when we see Romeo in torment at Friar Lawrence's cell (III. iii) we are not to assume that the antithetical flights in which he laments the sentence of banishment are a return to the first Romeo. His outcry parallels, as Miss Mahood has noted, that in the preceding scene, where Juliet has fought against the belief that Romeo is slain; each episode must be placed among Shakespeare's 'first attempts to reveal a profound disturbance of mind by the use of quibbles' (p. 70). This is an 'immaturity' in the lovers, if we will; but it is also the dramatist's means of showing us the inadequacy of settled and ordered language (as that of Friar Lawrence, with his confidence in 'armour to keep off [the] word') to deal with the bewildering reversals in which Romeo and Juliet find themselves. If the Friar must persist in speaking of what he cannot 'feel', this is the only language that the sufferers themselves can find to meet the first impact of disaster:

Hath Romeo slain himself? Say thou but 'I',
 And that bare vowel 'I' shall poison more
 Than the death-darting eye of cockatrice:
 I am not I, if there be such an I . . .

(III. ii. 45)

Juliet's tormented iteration is perfectly consonant with Romeo's own anguish:

Flies may do this, but I from this must fly . . .

(III. iii. 41)

It is a language which, embracing contradiction, is truer to reality than the single standpoints expressed by Nurse and Friar. We may add that this language sharpens into a more simple wordplay when a world that will not be changed is steadfastly accepted. When, in the end, Romeo has learned that 'philosophy' cannot

make a Juliet,
 Displant a town, reverse a prince's doom—

then alternatives are no longer balanced; for opposites become one:

O true apothecary!
 Thy drugs are *quick*. Thus with a kiss I *die*.

The speed of the poison unites life with death: and Juliet answers, as it were, in the same mode. She will kiss Romeo's lips, sharing what remains of the drug,

To make me die with a restorative.

Romeo, like Hamlet, is young, gifted, sensitive—and all but unequal to a situation which he cannot change. It is essential to our understanding that we see him grow from these beginnings to a final maturity which outsoars all else in the play. The gentleness proffered to Tybalt appears to Mercutio 'calm, dishonourable, vile submission'; but it is a profounder quality than any yielding to 'honour's' demands. It is matched by the first forbearance shown to Paris at the tomb—

By heaven, I love thee better than myself;
 For I come hither arm'd against myself—

and by the noble epitaph for a fallen opponent seen as a fellow-victim,

One writ with me in sour misfortune's book.

Romeo has come to a maturity that is but a short time distant from his lying 'on the ground, with his own tears made drunk'. These young lovers (for 'Even so' Juliet lies—'Blubbering and weeping, weeping and blubbering') grow to a final forgetfulness of self. Romeo obeys the Nurse's bidding to 'be a man': but the course taken by both the lovers is other than any the Nurse and the Friar can foresee in their concern with practical arrangements. Romeo's maturity is first evident in the comfort he gives Juliet, subject to foreboding, at their parting:

all these woes shall serve
For sweet discourses in our time to come.
(III. v. 52)

A moment later, Lady Capulet's arrival calls forth all Juliet's powers of dissimulation:

I never shall be satisfied
With Romeo, till I behold him—dead—
Is my poor heart so for a kinsman vex'd.
(III. v. 94)

This prepares us, as Miss Mahood has noted, for the determination with which Juliet is to fight down her fears in pursuing the plan of a feigned death. The soliloquy ('Farewell! God knows when we shall meet again . . .', IV. iii. 14 ff.) is at once the test and vindication of her maturity. The characterization of Juliet is all Shakespeare's own, and it is based on the essential alteration in his material—her extreme youthfulness, which authorizes both the simple certainty of premonition⁴ and the artless candour of her first dealings with Romeo, where it is particularly noticeable that, at their meeting after the ball, the 'jeune fears and long speeches' of Brooke's Julietta are 'turned to innocent frankness' and the untutored Juliet's withdrawing and returning, 'irresistibly drawn back to her lover', gives variety and urgency to Brooke's lengthy dialogue (Bullough, p. 280). These two children, as the managing adults of their world see them, are, truly, innocents abroad. But they are quick to learn; in Romeo's attempted consolation of Juliet at their final leave-taking (III. v) we see the beginning of maturity in the man, while Juliet's improvised but spirited dissimulation of her true feelings (when reproved

⁴ ' . . . we are not to take it as anything more than a momentary superstitious utterance' (Duthie, p. xxi). But does not the very innocence and inexperience of Juliet as 'subject' make heaven's 'stratagems' not less but more real? Certainly, the mood is all over in a moment for her; but not, therefore, for the audience.

for grief by her mother) is evidence of her purpose, growing in its turn. Their love has been truly consummated; in the exchanges before parting there is a sharing of the burden of consolation. To this effect the earlier immaturity of the lovers is essential. We are to feel the prematurity of their love, their response to demands thrust upon them ahead of the ordinary process of time. Before Juliet is united with her lover, time works as it does in 'old folks'—'Unwieldy, slow, heavy and pale as lead'. Now, at their parting, Juliet's earlier invocation to the 'fiery-footed steeds' is sadly fulfilled, as daylight comes irresistibly on: 'More light and light it grows'. Time will have its revenge when, separated, the lovers are to find 'in a minute there are many days'.

The relation of the lovers' youth and thus unformed character to the process of time is vital, for it involves the great and challenging contrast between age without maturity and youth called to premature 'estate' (to use Friar Lawrence's word). The paradoxical, conceited poetry with which we begin—a poetry appropriate to 'immature' love, if we will—is essential to our understanding of the ends to which the lovers drive; for in that love-poetry the Elizabethan imagination had hitherto made its most frequent contact with the antithesis of change and permanence. It is, peculiarly, the subject of Renaissance poetry as a whole; for who but the poet can bind time—in the very act of declaring time's apparent victories? And for the dramatist, time is not so much a 'subject' as his essential medium. Before the play is done, the conventional antitheses of young love give place to 'the finest poetry which had yet been heard on the English stage'.⁵ To see the dramatist's imagination at its work of selecting, shaping and transcending we must look, however briefly, at the sources of this play.

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The paradoxical nature of Elizabethan love-poetry is, as more than one critic has noted, peculiarly adaptable to a drama of sudden alternations. Thus, Bullough observes that Shakespeare 'modulates from the public to the private theme' when he 'makes Romeo's conventional passion express itself in contradictions and paradoxes suited to the pattern of the whole play' (p. 278). It is a fruitful remark. We may study these contradictions and paradoxes, evident in Shakespeare's general handling of his source-material, under several heads: as, contrast of tempo; the play of coincidence; and the conquering of all-conquering time (where, especially, the 'conceits' of traditional poetry are important). Only the outstanding

⁵ K. Muir, *Shakespeare's Sources*, i (1957), 30.

instances can be noticed here; and we must add that the remarkable achievement in this early play is not the managing of striking moments but the unity of the whole. We have, in the end, to consider a balance which subsumes all antitheses.

The onward drive of events that concern the lovers, as against the slower pace of a world going about its habitual business—so that the nine months' action of Brooke's *Tragicall Historye* is crowded into a few days—is nowhere clearer than in the handling of the first three scenes of the play. As Bullough notes, by the end of I. iii both Romeo and Juliet are going to the ball—'one to see the woman he thinks he loves; the other to see . . . the man her parents want her to love. Both are soon to change.' Inevitable cross-purpose is thus communicated; and in I. v the changefulness of Romeo, hitherto the conventionally undying lover of Rosaline, is paralleled by Juliet's awakening to the truth of conventional poetry:

Prodigious birth of love it is to me,
That I must love a loathed enemy.

But what is this to an inquiring world? Curiosity is neatly turned aside; it is only

A rhyme I learn'd even now
Of one I danced withal.

The turning-point for Romeo alters all that has gone before:

Did my heart love till now? Forswear it, sight!
For I ne'er saw true beauty till this night.

It is an intended farewell to the fictions of poetry: and, immediately, the hostile world makes the first move against the lovers. Past time is not to be abolished, whatever Romeo may purpose. It is not merely a theatrical effect that is gained by Shakespeare postponing the unmasking (which in Brooke occurs before the meeting of Romeo and Juliet), so that the very words of love awaken unyielding enmity:

This, by his voice, should be a Montague . . .

That not Romeo himself but his lineage is identified speaks directly to our deeper sense that there can be no escape for him. The second great instance of time-alteration is, of course, the brawl taking place between

the marriage and its consummation (instead of 'a month or twain' afterwards). It is an alteration which deepens a fundamental difference from Brooke's lovers. Their living together in clandestine happiness risks the reader's sympathy; as G. A. Bonnard shrewdly observes 'in spite of their being married according to the rites of Holy Church their love assumes the aspect of an illicit affair' Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet must consummate their marriage in the knowledge that the morning brings separation; and, as we have seen, the time that had moved too slowly now hastens against them, just as the coming of light in the world outside brings only darkness to the lovers in their private world:

More light and light; more dark and dark our woes!

(III. v. 36)

The play of coincidence may be seen most clearly in the alterations that lead to the brawl and thus the banishment of Romeo and all that follows from it. Mercutio plays no part in the brawl in *The Tragical Historye*. There it is a general encounter which Romeus, summoned by the uproar, endeavours to stop; and even when attacked by Tybalt he refuses to return the blow, appealing for Tybalt's 'helpe these folke to parte'. Only when Tybalt strikes again does Romeus slay him. That Shakespeare's Romeo is unable to stop a duel between Tybalt and Mercutio—for the code of honour is common ground between them—defines, as we have seen, his unique position. But that in the end we are back at worse than the beginning—the Mercutio who had avenged a laggard Romeo must himself be avenged—illustrates as nothing else could the turning of Fortune's wheel. It is futility upon futility, and Shakespeare has made accident—Romeo's entering upon the scene and then his thrusting between the contestants—play the decisive part. Shakespeare knows, too, when to rely on silence—as, notably, when, unlike Brooke, he leaves the hostility of Montague and Capulet unexplained—just as he knows when to make coincidence beautifully exact: as, the entire naturalness of Juliet meeting Paris at Friar Lawrence's cell, when she has come there to seek a means of escaping marriage with him; or the father's natural delight in her apparent submission which causes him to advance the date of the wedding—so that Friar Lawrence, that exponent of 'Wisely and slow', must act in haste, while for Juliet there can be no postponement of decision; and, in the end, the coming of Paris to the tomb, which ratifies in death a love as disinterested as Romeo's own, bringing a worthy guest to a vault made 'a feasting presence full of light'.

Romeo's intervention stemmed by his love for Mercutio and desire for peace, rather than the deaths of Mercutio or Tybalt.

Shakespeare's wordplay gives us the most direct approach to that conquering of time which is at the play's centre. The ambiguities which we may be tempted to pass over as mere conceits have their own contribution to make. Thus, Romeo's language in the orchard at sight of Juliet 'above' plays delightedly with the impossible, that which is contrary to nature:

her eyes in heaven
Would through the airy region stream so bright
That birds would sing and think it were not night.
(II. ii. 20)

It is a passage which, as Miss Mahood has noted, is parallel with Juliet's apostrophe to night:

Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.
(III. ii. 21)

The love of Romeo and Juliet is in fact to transform the world they live in—but only when the order of time is not arrested or inverted but made powerless. That Death has no final power over the lovers is the great truth to which we are directed by their own rapturous hyperboles and by the central fact of their love, its freedom from any taint of the merely clandestine—which derives immediately from its swiftness and brevity, making it certain that they can have 'no share in the evil of their world' (Bonnard, p. 325). In the 'fearful passage' of this 'death-mark'd love' we can therefore see and accept apparent opposites; and this acceptance is required from the outset, where both 'fearful' and 'death-mark'd' mean, not only 'pathetic' and 'doomed', but also 'terrifying' and 'deathward bound', journeying to Death as to a destination (Mahood, p. 56).

In this, *Romeo and Juliet* fulfills an essential condition of all experience which warrants the term 'tragic', no matter what the special design and scope of the tragic form attempted. Whether 'tragedy' or *tragedie* in the major distinction discussed earlier, all must turn on the spectator perceiving not one meaning preponderating over its opposite, but both present, the more vividly for their interaction, in an experience where understanding can be full since intervention, the imaginative taking of sides, is totally inhibited. In tragedy of the causal-connective kind,

opposites are transcended in an experience which is accepted as 'thus, and only thus' in its working. In *tragedie* these ordinary opposites yield before a greater good. The situation that we encounter in *Romeo and Juliet* is big with promise in the Shakespearian imagination—man caught in a world that tolerates no questions, knowing only reasons for action. *Hamlet*, as was said above, is the obvious instance. But the plight of the honourable man, owing a duty to 'the stock and honour' of his 'kin' may suggest also the situation of Prince Hal, placed between the firebrand Hotspur and the prudent Falstaff; between, too, the unargued confidence of the old in appearances—and thus their confidence in problems 'solved' which yet lie in wait for the young—and a time of reckoning which comes inexorably on. The tragic potentiality is the questioning of what will not yield to question, so that the situation is unalterable save by sacrificial death. In the tetralogy completed in *Henry V* all unwarranted confidence must be destroyed—literally so in Falstaff's death, metaphorically in the young King on the eve of battle—before the new order can be established. In *Hamlet* the old revenge-tragedy, 'Blood will have blood', comes face to face with the new: 'O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right!' Birth must lead directly to death in a world which cannot be otherwise altered. *Romeo and Juliet*, like *Richard II*, offers a meeting-place of the old *tragedie* of ineluctable doom and a newer thing—the plain truth that man will not willingly relinquish his transitory happiness (*li ben vani*). The tragedy must drive to man's dispossession, his being 'eased With being nothing'; but then we may see a final triumph. The real significance of 'character' in such a drama is not in terms of 'flaws', nor in any more general emphasis upon causal connection (as the 'impetuosity' of the lovers in *Romeo and Juliet*). It is rather in the intensity of contrast between initial immaturity and the prematurity forced upon the protagonists. In that light we see man confronting and in the end dominating the ends to which he is brought—not by a fighting withdrawal but by accepting and going to meet his destiny. The 'ripeness' or readiness, especially as it is manifest between fellow-sufferers in the bond of love, is all. If that tie holds, Death is robbed of the greater glory; the ending is triumph, a transcending the limits of mortality by holding fast, in a union of suffering, to what is best in the mortal condition.

If this is the shape of tragedy in some early works of Shakespeare, including *Romeo and Juliet*, what status shall we accord it in the whole body of Shakespearian insights? In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, following hard upon *Romeo and Juliet*, the story of Pyramus and Thisbe affords 'very tragical mirth'. The 'concord of this discord' is to be found in

belated reconciliation, with Bottom starting up from the grave to assure us that

the wall is down that parted their fathers.

Does Shakespeare's mature vision, in comedy and tragedy alike, leave aside the striking fiction of reconciliation purchased by death, to dwell upon the sober truth that

Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating time?

★ ★ ★

In the plays which A. C. Bradley selected for special attention there is an ample scope for the things we have seen in these early tragedies—notably, the play of accident; the reversals of Fortune; time as not to be bound; an unalterable contrast between the old for whom reality is immovably settled and the young who needs must change it. These themes and motifs contribute organically to tragedies in which there is none the less a primary emphasis upon the character of the protagonists, and a continuing, though subtle, relationship between manifest failings in character and the disasters which befall. But this is yet consonant with something which conceptions of tragic grandeur—and notably the high compliment of Shakespeare 'restoring to tragedy the sceptred pall of its ancient dignity and place'⁶—may cause us to overlook. There are remarkable developments in Shakespeare's art; but it is perhaps even more remarkable that in the whole range from Richard Crookback to Macbeth the essential status of the evil-doer remains the same. In the latest tragic portrayal of a conscious evil, that evil is not worse than a terrifying *naïveté*, which thinks to do the impossible—to arrest the course of time—and laments in the end the isolation that has been achieved. The greatest punishment in the Shakespearian tragic universe appears to be constant: it is to realize that the world of 'I am I' has in fact been attained. But what is conveyed is less the note of grandeur than of ineffaceable stupidity—the absurdity of isolation. For opposed to wilful individualism is an utter simplicity of goodness, expressed as unity between human beings, especially in the blessed relationship of love. Johnson held that Shakespeare's 'tragedy seems to be skill, his comedy to be instinct'. What perhaps makes for 'comedy' is a profound sense of the reality of human loyalty—that to aim beyond the human condition in these terms, the interdependence of the human family, is to err, and to

⁶ P. Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

err foolishly. In the later tragedies mortals err to their own destruction; in the early tragedies we have been considering, especially in *Richard II* and *Romeo and Juliet*, where the links with *tragedie* are strong, they err to the destruction of others. In *Romeo and Juliet*, the limits within which the human figure can be treated as agent are clear in the activity of mortals—Nurse and Friar, father and mother, friend and clan-enemy—who would bend others to their designs. For this activity serves only to leave those others more clearly the victims of mischance when it comes, without raising problems of character-connection, the relation between what they are and what they must suffer.

The great difference between *Romeo and Juliet* and later tragedies is the exploration of this connection: and Shakespeare's entry upon it is in terms of a purposeful evil, an evil which would seek not merely the downfall but the extinction of all that is other than itself; Aaron is the crude but substantial prototype of Iago. It is therefore true that Shakespeare's tragic development 'does not exactly proceed through *Romeo and Juliet*';⁷ though the elements common to earlier and later tragic plays should not be overlooked in any simplified account of the 'tragedy of character'. If we seek the line of development from *Romeo and Juliet* we may find it not in the later tragedies but in the antitype of *tragedie*, those last plays of Shakespeare where the scope of accident includes the truth of fortunate accident, so that ancient wrongs are righted and the old make way for newness of life in the young; where fulfilment is achieved in this world and not in a region beyond the stars, even death itself being cancelled and the exile returned to his native land; where all, in fine, is subject to a Time which is not envious or calumniating but, joining with mortal designs, 'Goes upright with his carriage'. Such dramatic work, like *Romeo and Juliet* itself, is not to be dismissed by easy reference to 'the magic of Shakespeare's poetic genius' and 'the intermittent force of his dramatic power' as against any 'grasp of the foundations' of dramatic art (Charlton, p. 62). In *Macbeth* a sure grasp of the foundations of tragedy reaffirms that the attempt to bind time is an inherent impossibility: and there all a mature playwright's understanding of his art persuades us of the folly of any who would 'mock the time with fairest show'. If this is characteristically the dramatist's emphasis, drawing upon his deepest sense of the very medium in which he works, in both *Romeo and Juliet* and the last plays there is evident an Elizabethan poet's sense of paradox, of inherent impossibility only to be cancelled when love is triumphant. Romeo's boast—'love-devouring death do what he dare . . .'—and

⁷ J. C. Maxwell, ed., *Titus Andronicus*, New Arden Shakespeare (1953), p. xlvii.

Juliet's defiance of time are not tragic errors. They are not less than statements of the incompatibility between man and time when man would reach beyond time. We must not let our preconceptions blind us to the real drift and emphasis in Shakespeare, more particularly when there are involved ideas of drama and poetry with which we are relatively unfamiliar. That theme of reconciliation which is strongest and most constant of all in Shakespeare has a higher place in the Elizabethan imagination than we ordinarily may be prepared to allow.⁸

The poetry which, in tragedy and romance alike, expresses these values, is fully charged with oblique meaning. Shakespeare's Friar Lawrence expatiating on the properties of herbs goes beyond the text Brooke had written for him, a simple discourse upon the right and wrong uses of knowledge, to the nature of man, himself the subject of contending forces of 'grace and rude will'. In doing so, Friar Lawrence speaks more than he knows. His herbs will, in the event, lie in no separate and opposed categories; but, like the Apothecary's poison, they will at once heal and destroy. Friar Lawrence's is a world of firmly distinct properties. In this he is like Perdita of *The Winter's Tale*, another who discourses upon Nature's gifts of the earth: and it is a similar irony that the case for crossing these categories, by grafting different stocks, is something Perdita indignantly refuses while it is yet the destiny to which she must be brought, in a final order of reconciliation where all distinction between natural and artificial disappears in an art which 'itself is nature'. For the true placing of *Romeo and Juliet* we must look to Shakespeare's whole development, including those romances which offer a final check to any merely 'connective' drama; and which, allowing a free play of apparent opposites, exhibit the full context in which we are to place Elizabethan exploration of what man is and what may befall him. Shakespeare's course is not simple, but it is distinctive. Rejecting the stereotype of cruel Fortune's blows—man as merely the weak subject of heaven's stratagems—he reinvests *tragedie* with the sense of greater good. But it is a profound fidelity to the fact which places the attainment of that good on the further side of life. Man must be forcibly dispossessed before he can discover a power of bearing it out even to the edge of doom. Love is then transcendent, itself a 'Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear'. Manifestly, such a climax is a triumph of poetic drama; the lovers outsoar the shadow of our night. The last act of this play, standing on the eve of the tragic sequence that begins with *Julius Caesar*, is surpassed in

⁸ See N. Frye, 'The Argument of Comedy', *English Institute Essays*, 1948 (1949), pp. 58-73.

intensity only by the close of *Antony and Cleopatra*, where that sequence ends. But there, as here, we see that the drama is dependent on no mere fiction. The lovers purchase a final unity at the only true cost; and it is a cost exacted from them by the onward drive of events. If we can lay aside our preconceived notions alike of the 'tragedy of character' and the 'tragedy of fortune' we may see that *Romeo and Juliet* is profoundly consistent with the longer run of the Shakespearian imagination.

Note

First Editions. The first extant quarto of *1 Henry IV* is dated 1598: 'The History of Henrie the fourth; With the battell at Shrewsburie, betweene the King and Lord Henry Percy, surnamed Henrie Hotspur of the North. With the humorous conceits of Sir John Falstafffe.' There were six quartos before 1623. *2 Henry IV* had one edition, of two issues, both dated 1600: 'The Second part of Henrie the fourth, continuing to his death and coronation of Henrie the fift. With the humours of sir John Falstafffe, and swaggering Pistoll. As it hath been sundrie times publikely acted by the right honourable, the Lord chamberlaine his servants. Written by William Shakespeare.' Also in 1600 appeared the first quarto of 'The Cronicle History of Henry the fift, With his battell fought at Agin Court in France. Together with Auntient Pistoll. As it hath bene sundry times playd by the Right honorable the Lord Chamberlaine his servants.'

Modern Editions. There is a New Arden text of *1 Henry IV*, edited by A. R. Humphreys, who is preparing *2 Henry IV*. *1* and *2 Henry IV* are edited by J. Dover Wilson in the New Cambridge Edition (1946); this series includes Stage-Histories. S. B. Hemingway's New Variorum Edition of *1 Henry IV* (1936) was valuably supplemented by G. B. Evans (1956). *Henry V* is edited by J. H. Walter in the New Arden Edition (1954), and by J. Dover Wilson in the New Cambridge Edition (1947).

Scholarship and Criticism. H. Jenkins reviews scholarly and critical writings about 'Shakespeare's History Plays: 1900-1951' in *Shakespeare Survey* (1953). The same writer has approached *The Structural Problem in . . . Henry the Fourth* (1956), and recent arguments concerning 'The Unity of *2 Henry IV*' are considered by C. Leech in *Shakespeare Survey* (1953). Further light on the relationship of the two plays is thrown by H. E. Cain, *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1952).

Full studies of Shakespeare's History plays include those by L. B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's 'Histories'* (1947), viewing them as 'Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy'; E. M. W. Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944), a study of their cyclical tradition; and D. A. Traversi's *Shakespeare from Richard II to Henry V* (1957) which seeks to win back the dramatic pattern of *Richard II*, *1* and *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V*, rather than study their background. J. Dover Wilson's *The Fortunes of Falstaff* (1944) is a stimulating essay on the criticism and the character.

A useful theatrical record has been written by J. Dover Wilson and T. C. Worsley in *Shakespeare's Histories at Stratford, 1951* (1952), when *Richard II*, *1* and *2 Henry IV* and *Henry V* were performed (in sequence) at the Memorial Theatre.

VII

*The Comical-tragical-historical method—
'Henry IV'*

GARETH LLOYD EVANS

★

IN 2 *Henry IV*, Prince Henry stealthily takes the crown of England from his dying father's bedside and addresses it

The care on thee depending
Hath fed upon the body of my father;
Therefore, thou best of gold art worst of gold:
Other, less fine in carat, is more precious,
Preserving life in medicine potable;
But thou, most fine, most honour'd, most renown'd,
Hast eat thy bearer up.

(IV. v. 159)

His words convey a vision of the nature of kingship, and, by implication of the State itself, which is far removed from any other conception of the royal condition in Shakespeare's previous history plays. For Prince Hal the crown does not have the awesome status of a multiple symbol of power, majesty, grief and death. It is for him nearer to being a dangerous bauble, notwithstanding its tacit symbolism. When he discovers that he has too quickly taken it up, he returns it with words which suggest that the greatest offence he has committed is against his father, rather than against the appointed King of England. The simplicity of the gentle 'There is your crown' followed by his anguished

God witness with me, when I here came in,
And found no course of breath within your majesty,
How cold it struck my heart!

with its hint of ceremony, leads to the angry irony of his address to the crown, with its bitter counterpointing of 'my father' and 'Thee'. The

crown indeed holds awe, majesty, pain and terror, but Hal's expression of these turns abstraction into personalized grief:

I put it on my head,
To try with it, as with an enemy
That had before my face murder'd my father.

The king's reply also significantly suggests a personal reaction to Hal's grief and regret:

O my son,
God put it in thy mind to take it hence,
That thou mightest win the more thy father's love

Throughout the scene the father-son relationship swells out giving an additional dimension to the imperial theme. But, and this is important, we have been conditioned from the beginning of *1 Henry IV* to see this dimension. We have been familiars with a royal prince, who himself has been a familiar with a world elsewhere, where he has been 'educated' to make trial by experience of the abstractions which must later enclose his life.

The two parts of *Henry IV* encompass two worlds—the world of Kingship and ceremony, and the natural world. The connecting link is Prince Hal; he has commerce with both, and it is what the one world teaches him that enables him finally to take up his habitation in the other. In each world he is confronted with living example of kingship—his own father, and his 'adopted' father, Falstaff, emperor of the natural. Both 'kings' have a kingdom to bequeath—the one the realm of England, the other, a realm of knowledge and experience. Both kings perish so that Hal may come into his kingdoms—the one by the natural order of death, the other by rejection.

In *1 Henry IV* Hal begins his 'education'. No other prince of England in Shakespeare's histories is shown making himself deliberately a semi-fugitive from the world of royalty so that he may more certainly and dramatically enter into his heritage with the aura of man and royalty re-born. The process is self-imposed, and in some measure, self-denying, and one ironic result of it is to set up a poignant personal tension between himself and his father. The conscious purpose of Hal is emphasized time and again. For the present his creed reads 'wisdom cries out in the streets, and no man regards it', but there is more than a touch of conceit, a sort of satisfied self-seeing in his private ruminations through the stews of London. There is much in Hal that loves flourish and drama. He looks forward to the great re-birth with youthful relish.

If all the year were playing holidays,
 To sport would be as tedious as to work;
 But when they seldom come, they wish'd for come,
 And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
 So, when this loose behaviour I throw off,
 And pay the debt I never promised,
 By how much better than my word I am,
 By so much shall I falsify men's hopes;
 And like bright metal on a sullen ground,
 My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,
 Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes,
 Than that which hath no foil to set it off.

(I. ii. 227)

Boyish conceit perhaps, but there is a calculated reasoning about it and a sense of high purpose. Here is a man assuming a false face, putting on a madcap disposition to ensure a desired result. The 'reformation' is a calculated effect—its inevitability is a species of faith for Hal—and this self-conscious responsibility is the keynote of his relationship with Falstaff. Hal has never actually sinned—the early remarks about wenching have the flavour of verbal artifice and nothing else.

When the Gadshill plans are made, the whole tone is that of persuasion. There is a strong impression that this is the first time that Hal has ever considered the possibility of an actual indulgence in the nefarious escapades of Falstaff.

HAL: Well then, once in my days I'll be a madcap.

FALSTAFF: Why, that's well said.

HAL: Well, come what will, I'll tarry at home.

FALSTAFF: By the Lord, I'll be a traitor then, when thou art king.

HAL: I care not.

POINS: Sir John, I prithee, leave the prince and me alone: I will lay him down such reasons for this adventure that he shall go.

FALSTAFF: Well, God give thee the spirit of persuasion and him the ears of profiting, that what thou speakest may move and what he hears may be believed, that the true prince may, for recreation's sake, prove a false thief.

(I. ii. 160)

The emphasis here is plain. It is not merely that the prince is having to be persuaded to join in the affair; more pertinently it is the sense that his participation is a kind of formality 'for recreation's sake'. There was never a less villainous planning than this for Gadshill. It is no more nor less than tomfoolery. Its 'chief virtue' is the unmasking of Falstaff's

braggadocio cowardice. The action and the results of Gadshill remain carefully within the atmosphere with which the robbery is planned. In no sense is the prince involved in the actual robbery; in every sense he has a care to be disguised—his first words to Poins before the travellers arrive, are 'Ned, where are our disguises?' This prince remains unstained—his committal to the world of Falstaff is academic; he observes and learns. Any doors that might lead us to question the actual propriety of Hal are carefully closed by Shakespeare. Hal lays no hands upon the travellers. Their money is returned, the 'jest' is all.

Even so Hal's preoccupation with this world, academic though it may be, when contrasted with the idealized Hotspur, and in the light of the anguish of the King who sees nothing but 'riot and dishonour' stain the brow of his son, is sufficient not only to sketch the outlines of the personal tensions which are to well up later between father and son, but also to give an ironic depth to the widening theme of rebellion and the need for strong succession.

Yet, because of his self-conscious responsibility Hal has about him something too good to be true. He dips only his fingertips in mud, and Shakespeare is careful to wipe them clean. He has about him the self-conscious pride of the man whose indulgence is very circumspect.

The first appearance of Hal after Gadshill has, however, a different complexion. He and Poins meet together at the Boar's Head to await Falstaff, and there occurs the puzzling action with Francis the drawer. As Dover Wilson says, in *The Fortunes of Falstaff*, 'Critics have solemnly entered it up in their black book of Hal's iniquities and accused him on the strength of it of "heartlessly endangering the poor drawer's means of subsistence".' Yet it is difficult to find Dover Wilson's cheery explanation that 'the main purpose of this trifling episode, apart from giving Falstaff's voice a rest after the roaring and in preparation for the strain of the scene ahead, is to keep the audience waiting agog for him', any more convincing. The actor playing Falstaff has already had a scene—that between Hotspur and Kate—in which to rest his voice. As to keeping the audience 'agog' for the fat wonder, surely the Hotspur scene fulfils that purpose, especially since in location and tone it takes our minds sufficiently far away from the fooleries of Gadshill to make a return to that atmosphere seem overdue. And if it were necessary for us to be introduced to the Boar's Head and the Prince in order to set the atmosphere for the arrival of Falstaff, why continue the scene-setting so long with this 'trifling episode'? Perhaps the explanation of the scene may lie within the boundaries of the knowledge of the Prince which has so far

been vouchsafed to us. He is the pure Prince, the conscious wearer of a mask of very harmless anarchy. Indeed all he has done is to wear a mask—he has not indulged in a dance of anarchy. In this scene, however, it may be suggested that Shakespeare, in order to give some depth of credibility to Hal's sojourn in the kingdom of Falstaff, and to the tension between Henry IV's conception of his wild son and the reality, here shows something more than the academic observer of Falstaff's dominion. Here for a short time the Prince is committed to that dominion in a positive, though still relatively harmless, way. For a short time he relaxes his hold on the conscious curriculum of his 'education', and engages with that he had decided to observe. In short, he is drunk.

When Poinc asks him where he has been, Hal replies

With three or four loggerheads amongst three or four score hogsheads. I have sounded the very base-string of humility. Sirrah, I am sworn brother to a leash of drawers.

(II. iv. 4)

In the interim, since Gadshill, Hal has been pursuing his 'education' and, like a naughty boy who steals the dregs at a wedding feast, is as much intoxicated by his sense of sin as by what he has drunk. Hal relishes the 'dyeing scarlet' of drinking, and that he can 'drink with any tinker in his own language'. His language has the flush of drinking on its face, and the repetitive sibilants of alcohol, and he has entered into the lovely world of hail-fellow-well-met:

I am no proud Jack, like Falstaff, but a Corinthian, a lad of mettle, a good boy, by the Lord, so they call me, and when I am king of England, I shall command all the good lads in Eastcheap.

He has the tipsy man's giggly desire for a game, and Francis is the victim. When he asks Poinc to call Francis, and Poinc does so, Hal, with that pointless verbal backslapping which is the temporary gift of alcohol, murmurs—"Thou art perfect". And the jest with Francis is pointless, it is a 'trifling episode' in the manner in which much pub gaming is pointless and trifling, and by its pointlessness mitigates the discomfiture of the victim. Even Poinc, who has not been with Hal amongst 'three or four score hogsheads' cannot fathom the game. 'Come, what's the issue?' The truth is that there is no 'issue' that Hal could possibly explain to Poinc. But Hal is not so tipsy that he does not dimly remember the issue himself. His answer is:

I am now of all humours that have showed themselves humours since

the old days of goodman Adam to the pupil age of this present twelve o'clock at midnight.

Now, in his own mind, he can confirm what he had earlier promised.

I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyok'd humour of your idleness.

(I. ii. 218)

Drink has taken Hal deeper into the world of Falstaff than he has ever been or ever will be again. In his fuddled state he thinks of Hotspur, but he talks of Hotspur in the language of Falstaff.

I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the north; he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife 'Fie upon this quiet life! I want work'. 'O my sweet Harry,' says she, 'how many hast thou killed today?' 'Give my roan horse a drench', says he; and answers 'Some fourteen', an hour after; 'a trifle, a trifle'. I prithee, call in Falstaff: I'll play Percy, and that damned brawn shall play Dame Mortimer his wife.

(II. iv. 212)

This is the same comic-cynical vision that sees honour in terms of 'he that died a Wednesday'; in a few moments when Falstaff arrives we are to hear just such another 'parcel of reckoning' in Falstaff's monstrous fantasies of the men he fought at Gadshill. The possibilities of Hal disengaging himself from this definite descent into the world of Falstaff are, to say the least, tenuous. Falstaff at bay is Falstaff at his most dangerous. Hal, in the flush of wanting to rub home the discomfiture of Falstaff, faces an adversary adept, not only in the art of verbal escapology, but one, when cornered, capable of taunting, corrupting, verbal sword-play. The great scene in which Falstaff relates his version of Gadshill moves impeccably on two lines which intertwine and separate and intertwine, enfolding in their pattern a rich and total image of the education of Hal, his relationship with Falstaff, and through both a vision of kingship which, when it is seen in relation to the royal world Hal returns to, creates the most moving and mature comment in the history plays. The developments of I. iv, after the entry of Falstaff, are firstly the comic surface where Falstaff and Hal, indeed the rest of the crew of the Boar's Head, exist, as it were, man to man—it is the comedy which unites them; secondly the relationship between Hal and Falstaff which exists below the surface of their comic union and is constantly tending to disunite Hal from the kingdom of Falstaff. Ironically, it is the very advantage which Falstaff attempts to seize through his comic largesse of wit that gradually

pushes Hal further away from his world, and actually helps to redeem Hal from slipping further into a state he had vowed merely to observe. Falstaff's great comic flaw is his inability to know when to stop—or rather it is both his strength and his weakness. It gives him his monumental self-glowing status and takes away from him his ability to 'hold' his most illustrious subject, Prince Henry.

When he enters, Falstaff is hot, dishevelled and angry. He rouses Hal to a pitch of anger by equating 'coward' with 'Prince'. Hal is caught on the raw, confronted with a direct image of himself coined in the realm of Falstaff. But the heat of anger passes, and Falstaff's imagination gathers strength. Out of his dangerous rage, the monstrous comedy of his account of Gadshill grows. Under the Prince's swift questioning and frustration Falstaff ascends to the highest peak of his comic dominion. The corner into which he has been pushed, cannot hold him, and there comes what Dover Wilson calls his 'consummate retort',

By the Lord, I knew ye as well as he that made ye.

There is no doubt that the brilliance of Falstaff's verbal gymnastics during this scene endears him to that part of us which revels in the bright machinations of roguery. Never again was Shakespeare to create such a sustained example of the magnificence of the solitary comic spirit. It rests at the opposite pole of the tragic hero's awareness of self. Where his is self-immolating, self-examining, inward turning, Falstaff's is self-expanding, outward turning, feeding on its own audacity, and gloriously aware of the incredible but magnetic effect it creates. But what is equally plain throughout this scene is that Falstaff is meticulously and unconsciously digging his own grave: his future grows less as he builds himself great. Falstaff's account of Gadshill is a superb essay in the art of cowardice. By the very deviousness of his description he proves the falsity and enormity of his naming Hal a coward. The coward is anatomized here—first his rage at apparent exposure, then his outrageous exaggeration, as if cloud-capped towers of falsehood will hide the earthy truth, and finally the hollow, audacious, magnificent trump-card—the attempt to put himself on the side of the angels.

Hal does not let the meaning of the essay go unmarked, 'the argument shall be thy running away'.

The relish with which Hal accepts Falstaff's invitation to 'stand for' his father the King, and to examine the particulars of his life, is an appetite based less on love of the 'game' than on the assurance of his own inviolable, secret purposes.

The mock trial scene is of very great significance since it is the last time that Falstaff is seen 'in state' with his chief subject, Hal. His reign over Hal is much shorter than is often admitted, and this scene represents a final audience before a long-drawn-out abdication. Shakespeare allows Falstaff to retain the high comic status he has achieved in his description of Gadshill. Falstaff sits on the throne first. But this over-indulgence of his comic craft once again causes a gap to widen between himself and Hal. He takes up his symbols and effects of office: 'this chair shall be my state, this dagger my sceptre, and this cushion my crown' (II. iv. 415). And the Prince's repetition: 'Thy state is taken for a joined stool, thy golden sceptre for a leaden dagger, and thy precious rich crown for a pitiful bald crown', with its emphasis on 'thy', sharply distinguishes comic licence and hard reality. Falstaff plays the game of King-father to Hal, but turns the occasion once more to his favourite theme, himself. The previous swelling fantasies of Gadshill are forgotten, and the new theme is a mocking catalogue of virtues. Yet there creeps into this feast of fooling a shadow of uncertainty, 'If then the tree may be known by the fruit, as the fruit by the tree, then peremptorily I speak it, there is virtue in that Falstaff; him keep with, the rest banish' (469).

There is a cold silence implied between this and the Prince's next words. Hal does not reply to the challenge—his mind has leapt to another world of consideration; 'Dost thou speak like a king? Do thou stand for me, and I'll play my father'.

Hal forces him on to the defensive—once more the shadow falls, and banishment is uttered. It is as if Falstaff is fatally fascinated by the need for an answer. He dare not question, but uses an appealing imperative:

No, my good lord; banish Peto, banish Bardolph, banish Poins: but for sweet Jack Falstaff, kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff, valiant Jack Falstaff, and therefore more valiant, being as he is, old Jack Falstaff, banish not him thy Harry's company, banish not him thy Harry's company; banish plump Jack, and banish all the world.

But he gets an unequivocal answer: 'I do, I will.'

There are no more dramatic interruptions than that which suddenly cuts across the stage at this point. Bardolph runs in shouting that the sheriff is at the door. Falstaff has been left in an agony of apprehension by Hal's words—he hardly takes in the fact that the law stands outside his door. He says to Bardolph, 'Out, ye rogue! Play out the play; I have much to say in the behalf of that Falstaff.'

Indeed he has much to say, but nothing ever again that can gainsay what Hal has said. Dover Wilson, observing that following Hal's words

the Cambridge and other modern editions supply a stage direction, '*A knocking heard, exeunt Hostess, Francis and Bardolph*', notes that neither quartos nor Folio supply previous exits for these three, and complains that firstly, this would leave the stage silent for several moments ('which is absurd'), and secondly the direction is unnecessary since Bardolph and the Hostess could exit at any time during the scene unnoticed by the audience. But it may be said that the instinct of the editors is correct. Nothing could be less absurd than a silence at this point, with Falstaff and Hal left alone momentarily until Bardolph runs back with his dread news. Falstaff hardly hears Bardolph, nor the Hostess when she repeats that the sheriff is at the door. He is still alone with Hal. His tone is still pleadingly imperative: 'Dost thou hear, Hal? never call a true piece of gold a counterfeit; thou art essentially made without seeming so'. Falstaff asks Hal not to mistake his (Falstaff's) counterfeiting (i.e. cowardice) for his real character (a true piece of gold). Hal is one thing while seeming to be another—so, the inference is, why should not he, Falstaff, counterfeit too? This is an interpretation of Falstaff's activities which Hal in the next line completely rejects: 'And thou a natural coward, without instinct'.

With the intervention of the sheriff, Falstaff leaves and Hal does an office of friendship. He puts the sheriff off the scent. There is, however, an attitude of strong decision about him now. He seems to be slipping away from this world of riot. It is as if he is putting his effects in order before setting out on a journey from which he will not return the same person. He engages his word to the sheriff that Falstaff will answer to the charges; he promises that Falstaff will be answerable if found guilty; he says that all must go to the wars; that the money will be paid back with advantage. As for himself: 'I'll go to the court in the morning.'

The themes and issues of this great scene irradiate both parts of the play. The magnificence of its comedy, and the meanings which emerge from Hal's verbal encounters with Falstaff make it a scene central to both parts of the play. On the battlefield of Shrewsbury its memory strikes home with a sharp nostalgia, 'I fear the shot here; here's no scoring but upon the pate' (V. iii. 31). And when Hal meets Falstaff:

FALSTAFF: Nay, before God, Hal, if Percy be alive, thou get'st not my sword; but take my pistol, if thou wilt.

HAL: Give it me: what, is it in the case?

FALSTAFF: Ay, Hal; 'tis hot, 'tis hot; there's that will sack a city.

And Hal finds it to be a bottle of sack. Again in Falstaff's scenes with Shallow and Silence, there is constant backward looking at haunts now

deserted. And even in *Henry V* the long aroma of the Boar's Head stretches into the field of Agincourt, 'Would I were in an alehouse in London! I would give all my fame for a pot of ale and safety' (III. ii. 12).

But the suffusion of the atmosphere of the tavern throughout the plays is secondary to the depth of effect the action between Hal and Falstaff, within its walls, imposes upon the flow of the historical action. The comic anatomization of kingship and cowardice in their interplay—the interplay between a world of royalty feigning and a counterfeit world which has the greatness of influence thrust upon it by the shrewd audacity of comic genius, the knowledge we receive of Hal and his purposes—all this colours our acceptance of the historical narrative.

The two scenes following, for example, take on a deep irony. The rebellious leaders Hotspur and Glendower, whom we meet immediately afterwards, have no glow of greatness about them. Shakespeare does not make the mistake of creating too great a contrast with the Hotspur whom Hal has pictured in the exaggerated comedy of his intoxication. This Hotspur is a long way in stature from the man we met in the early scenes arguing with the king about prisoners. There he was coldly determined, arrogant, a champion of rights, now he is petulantly mulish, irritating. Hal has seen below the chivalric generalizations of his own father's picture of Hotspur as:

A son who is the theme of honour's tongue;
Amongst a grove, the very straightest plant;
Who is sweet Fortune's minion and her pride
(I. i. 81)

And the proof of Hotspur's other self is revealed in this cavilling taunting youth who rows with Glendower about magic and pieces of land. But, to the king, Hotspur remains the perfect son some 'night-tripping fairy' exchanged for his own. When Hal goes to him from the tavern, he is treated to a long regretful diatribe on his own iniquities—his 'low desires', 'mean attempts', 'barren pleasures', words which curiously fit the Hotspur we have just seen. Hal, who keeps his intentions always to himself, does not break his silence. Henry ruminates bitterly on the similarity of Hal's and Richard II's behaviour, and draws a picture of himself in isolated regal splendour—a kind of altar at which all genuflect in awe:

Thus did I keep my person fresh and new;
My presence, like a robe pontifical,
Ne'er seen but wondered at; and so my state,

Seldom but sumptuous, showed like a feast
And won by rareness such solemnity.

(III. ii. 55)

Hal's reply is tight-lipped:

I shall hereafter, my thrice gracious lord,
Be more myself.

It is only when the king brings up the name of Hotspur that Hal speaks at length. He does not explain away his 'iniquity', but formally avows his determination to startle the king and the world, and Hotspur:

for the time will come,
That I shall make this northern youth exchange
His glorious deeds for my indignities.

The tensions which inhabit this interview arise directly out of the commenting, revealing power of the Boar's Head scene. The King remains within the dim shadows of formal royalty. His picture of himself as Prince and King seems utterly and pathetically remote from the sharp realities of the kind of Prince that Hal is showing himself to be, and the kind of king he may become. Henry cannot see beyond the abstractions that surround royalty, and his stricken gaze falls upon the possibility that his usurping reign can only be succeeded by his stained son. Stuck as he is within ideas of kingship, he could never understand the practicalities of Hal's reasons for temporarily forsaking his world, in order to gouge out of experience a wisdom about men and about himself. Henry's tragedy, unlike that of his predecessor Richard, is seen to be less the result of an insufficiency to fit the royal condition, than complete isolation from the new world which is being born in the person of his son. To a king who can only see himself in terms of a cypher, a symbol, fixed and ceremonial, and all this ironically meaningless in the echo-chamber of usurpation, no other world can offer any meaning. And so Hal relieves the King of some of his grief in the only way in which Henry can understand—in a formal promise to change, and to wreak vengeance on Hotspur.

Hal has already set his face clearly in the direction of a return to a royal world—but on his own terms and of his own building. Throughout the rest of the history of the reign of Henry IV, the character of Hal constantly gains in integration, while the world of Henry and Hotspur—the political world of usurpation and rebellion—and the world of Falstaff,

the anarchic comic, constantly gain a momentum towards disintegration. As the history advances towards the Kingship of Hal, he is seen more and more as a rock of unity, a Prince of total experience, around which the rest disintegrates.

The decay of Falstaff begins most cogently in *1 Henry IV*, III, iii: 'Bardolph, am I not fallen away vilely since this last action? do I not bate? do I not dwindle?'

The comic self-sufficiency which made him, in his description of Gadshill seem inviolable and untouchable for a time, has suffered the calamity of losing its sense of infinity. Falstaff's comic genius needs something equal in magnificence to itself to feed upon. It must have Hal to gorge its pride and joy and exultation. The fact of Hal brings out the greatest in Falstaff. But from now on it has to dive into the deeps of a series of affairs and incidents which are unworthy of his comic wealth. There is, in *2 Henry IV* nothing around Falstaff which by its challenging presence can bring a flight of glory into his monstrous words of misrule. After the first Boar's Head scene he meets Hal on several occasions before his public banishment, but he is never allowed to swell as he did once when the young Prince first entered his kingdom. On Hal's second visit to the haunts of Falstaff, the fat man is defeated again by the Prince, and this time on his own grounds—money grabbing. Almost viciously he tries to cast Hal in the image he so desperately wants to see—the image of a Prince of his own misruling realm: 'Rob me the exchequer the first thing thou doest, and do it with unwashed hands too'. But he gets a dusty answer: 'I have procured thee, Jack, a charge of foot' (III. iii. 209). Again on the way to Coventry he meets Hal and is treated to a sharp comment on the shoddiness of his troop. He meets Hal before Shrewsbury, and is reminded that he owes God a death. When Hal visits the tavern in disguise he treats Falstaff to further words about Gadshill and cowardice. The next time he sees Hal he is publicly banished. All that Hal learns from Falstaff about the way of the world is returned to Falstaff, but weighed by a different scale of values and meanings. The comic success of Falstaff as he swells into the fullness of his illusory rule of Hal is one of diminishing returns. We see him more often in *2 Henry IV* but he is not the same man, or rather he is a shadow of the same man—his wit and comedy and triumphs are all at ground level. His largeness now is only comparative, and no longer an absolute, for it cannot but appear large faced with such puny adversaries as Shallow, Silence, Pistol and Doll Tearsheet. He is more given to soliloquy, and his conceit now has something of the bitterness of self-knowledge about it:

Men of all sorts take a pride to gird at me: the brain of this foolish-compounded clay, man, is not able to invent any thing that tends to laughter, more than I invent or is invented on me.

(I. ii. 6)

His tavern world is rich in action, in bawdry, in the machinations of commodity, but it is as far from the tavern world of the first part of the play as Falstaff is from Hal. Like Falstaff this world now seems merely sharp, shrewd, calculating. Its comedy no longer glows, largely because Falstaff, bereft of the Prince, can no longer be content with, perhaps is no longer capable of, superb comic improvisations whose source lay in a feeling of complete satisfaction. By blow after blow Falstaff has been separated from the Prince, and has no place in the new order to come. He is put in direct antagonism to the law, and less obviously as a counter-pointing agent to deepen the comic irony between rule and misrule. His 'kingship' is as empty as that of Henry's, partly because it knows that the succession is in doubt. The comi-tragedy of Falstaff is that of complete isolation from the new order, but in his isolation he has little of the inertia of Henry. He remains a true if pathetic king, he has usurped nothing though he has tried, and therefore retains energy and a sense of the validity of his own reign: 'I shall be sent for soon at night' (V. iv. 96).

As the world of Falstaff disintegrates about him, the rebellious world which surrounds the dying king itself disintegrates. There are occasions when it splutters into life, when it seems on the point of taking fire and engulfing all before it, but it exists largely in an atmosphere of endless bickering, questioning and false hopes. As the usurping King, Henry IV, whose sin has bred rebellion, fades away, so rebellion peters out. In *2 Henry IV*, the King speculates on the chaos of the political world; the tone is weary and valedictory:

O God! that one might read the book of fate,
And see the revolution of the times
Make mountains level, and the continent,
Weary of solid firmness, melt itself
Into the sea; and, other times, to see
The beachy girdle of the ocean
Too wide for Neptune's hips; how chances mock
And changes fill the cup of alteration
With divers liquors! O, if this were seen,
The happiest youth, viewing his progress through
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
Would shut the book, and sit him down and die.

(III. i. 45)

The King's counterpart is the 'crafty sick' Northumberland. His part in the rebellious camp is just as wearied and unconvinced; constantly through the course of the rebellion, his 'sickness doth infect the very life-blood of our enterprise'. The inertia of this rebel and his king stem from the same source—conscience. Worcester voices the suspicion:

it will be thought
By some, that know not why he is away,
That wisdom, loyalty and mere dislike
Of our proceedings kept the earl from hence.
(1 *Henry IV*, IV. i. 62)

But the death-blow is delivered at the battle of Shrewsbury, when the triumphant Prince of Wales stands over the dead Hotspur:

fare thee well, great heart!
Ill-weaved ambition, how much art thou shrunk!
When that this body did contain a spirit,
A kingdom for it was too small a bound;
But now two paces of the vilest earth
Is room enough.
(1 *Henry IV*, V. iv. 86)

He has, too, another office to perform,

What, old acquaintance! could not all this flesh
Keep in a little life? Poor Jack, farewell!
I could have better spared a better man:
O, I should have a heavy miss of thee,
If I were much in love with vanity!
Death hath not struck so fat a deer to-day,
Though many dearer, in this bloody fray.
Embowell'd will I see thee by and by;
Till then in blood by noble Percy lie.
(102)

The tone of this is regretful, but curiously as in hindsight. It is as if the apparently actual death of Falstaff is merely the palpable sign for Hal of a departing that occurred some time before:

O I should have a heavy miss of thee
If I were much in love with vanity.

Yet it is Falstaff who does the final symbolic office. He carries Hotspur

out of history—the world of comic anarchy, counterfeit to the end, trudges out with the world of misguided chivalry on its back.

At the battle of Shrewsbury Hal emerges as the dominant, dynamic Prince. He has redeemed his promise to his father. He has no rival in courage, his state is established. But there lurks on the edge of his status, his brother John of Lancaster. This cold, professional soldier and prince has no blot or stain on him—he has no wild past to raise a voice of doubt. He is less a threat, than a symbol of solid orthodox political royalty. But even in this sense he is an implied opposite to the free-ranging princeliness of Hal; he must be expunged. Shakespeare waits before wiping out this remnant of an orthodox world, but he prepares the stroke at Shrewsbury. Hal's magnanimity to Douglas is direct and simple—it has about it much of the sense of justice which is seen in Hal's judgment of the traitors before he, as Henry V, embarks for France. In the second climax of rebellion in 2 *Henry IV*, John of Lancaster has the initiative to deal with the rebels. He meets them, talks with them, drinks with them, and embraces them in counterfeit amity:

If this may please you,
Discharge your powers unto their several counties,
As we will ours; and here between the armies
Let's drink together friendly and embrace,
That all their eyes may bear those tokens home
Of our restored love and amity.

(IV. ii. 61)

He is at his highest peak, but a meanness of spirit, a politic trick, makes him break faith. He has nothing of Hal's correct compassion. He crashes into the wreckage of the world of Henry IV and his rebellious subjects, with his inadequate honour unmasked.

The movement of the two parts of *Henry IV* is implacably towards the raising of the figure of Hal as representative of a different kind of order than either of those which are laid bare and rejected. The dynamic natural, amoral world of Falstaff, and the tired outworn formalistic world of the King and rebels are, both, in a certain sense, chaotic. Neither world knows the other—only we see how the values of both are counterfeit, and how they shed a light one on the other. And only Hal learns the lesson, that the world of the natural, the temporary, and the world of the political and traditional, must both be experienced.

But merely to regard the plays as communicating a vision of life in which the personal natural order, and the political order are cynically

opposed, with Hal as the emerging champion of the new order is to ignore the human dramatic warmth which constantly vitalizes them.

Hal has to reject much, and overcome much, to achieve the fullness of kingship. In so far as he does this, he is inevitably a calculating self-conscious 'political' manipulator of his own destiny. It has been cogently argued by D. A. Traversi that the kind of success in politics which Hal achieves 'implies moral loss, the sacrifice of more attractive qualities in the distinctively personal order'. It is certainly arguable that in the rejection of Falstaff there is an acute example of this. But the rejection is clearly laid down from the beginning, and its inevitability must loom larger as Hal grows to the crown. But to sentimentalize the rejection is to falsify the relationship of Hal and Falstaff. On the political level, it is a clear necessity, though on the personal level it seems cold-blooded.

Yet it does less than justice to Hal and it 'softens' the presence of Falstaff, to make this distinction too sharp. In the welter of Falstaff's comedy, which endears in its audaciousness, in the working out of the large plan of the prince, it is easy to miss the nature of the essentially personal relationship between the two. The clearly personal ties are not developed—they could not possibly be—and they lie in small corners of the play, but when they are shown, it is almost always through the medium of Hal, and with affection. He covers Falstaff's retreat from the sheriff, he closes the Gadshill affair by seeing that the money is returned: 'O my sweet beef, I must still be good angel to thee'. His only reaction to Falstaff's claim to have killed Hotspur is the amiable

For my part, if a lie may do thee grace
I'll gild it with the happiest terms I have.

His speech to the 'dead' Falstaff, for all its punning and implied hindsight, is close and familiar. There is indeed more direct and implied affection in Hal than in Falstaff. In *1 Henry IV*, he bathes in the glow of Hal's presence, but the fire is used to heat not friendship, but the furnace of Falstaff's own wit. When he hears of the death of Henry IV, his reaction is characteristic:

Away, Bardolph! Come, Pistol, utter more to me; and withal devise something to do thyself good. Boot, boot, Master Shallow: I know the young king is sick for me. Let us take any man's horses; the laws of England are at my commandment. Blessed are they that have been my friends; and woe to my lord chief-justice!

(*2 Henry IV*, V. iii. 138)

This is indeed, as D. A. Traversi says, 'the voice of appetite'. If Hal's

appetite is implacably that of a man desiring and shaping a personal destiny and status, it is not unmitigated by an affection for that which supplies its nourishment. Falstaff's appetite consumes without taking a breath of affection. Hal's rejection of Falstaff may seem severe, but it is the end-product of the logic of his advance out of Falstaff's kingdom and out of the empty chaos of the kingdom of Henry IV. The other and final product is the essentially new kingdom of Henry V. This, too, is a formal world, with a ceremonial pattern, but the vital difference is that the pattern now is balanced, rich and all-inclusive. The 'education' of Prince Henry has ensured that the new world is one in which the political and the natural are blended, and in which the king actually as well as symbolically is the 'father' of all his people, and not a solitary repository of abstractions surrounded by a tight circle of political expediency:

A largess universal like the sun
His liberal eye doth give to everyone.

To regard *Henry V* as a disappointing sequel, devoid of the rich variety of characterization, tragic and comic, of *Henry IV* is to ignore the inevitable consequence of that play. Henry V is as aware of the responsibility of the king, as of his subjects; in him justice is implacable but truly just in that it is dispensed without favour; in him honour and chivalry are richer ores, taking their colour and content not from outworn and malleable forms, but from the actualities of the king's faith in his meanest and highest subjects, and his subjects' sense of being involved in the majesty of a kingdom. All this exists because, as Prince Hal, the king breathed the air of the commonalty, and purged royalty of its rootless fever.

In *Henry V* comedy and history dance to the same tune, and there can be little of tragedy in so triumphant a dance. The pattern of movement is all designed to celebrate a 'model' kingdom of 'inward greatness'. Here comic anarchy and political rebellion are mere remnant shreds—Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol, Cambridge, Scroop and Grey, are replaced by a new and joyous orthodoxy—the affirming comedy of Fluellen, and the selfless chivalry of Erpingham, Bedford and Salisbury. The dissenting voices in the new world—Pistol, Bates, and the rebellious trio executed at Southampton, are mere irritants which subtly prevent the body of Henry's new kingdom from seeming, dramatically, too hygienically healthy, and thus possessed of the boredom of unremitting perfection. When the king speculates on ceremony on 'the sword, the mace, the crown imperial' he utters two words which make his ruminations, other-

wise apparently cast in the solitary rhetoric of Henry VI and Richard II, imply a different order of kingship. They are 'I know':

I know
'Tis not the balm, the sceptre and the ball,
The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
The farced title running 'fore the king,
The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp
That beats upon the high shore of this world,
No, not all these, thrice-gorgeous ceremony,
Not all these, laid in bed majestical,
Can sleep so soundly, as the wretched slave,
Who with a body fill'd and vacant mind
Gets him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread
(IV. i)

The 'I know' is the proof of Henry's awareness of the 'wisdom that cries out in the streets', it is the legacy of observing the 'unyok'd humour' of his kingdom. It gives all his words and his deeds in *Henry V* the justification of a personal involvement and fills his majesty with meaning.

★ ★ ★

The political 'message' of 1 and 2 Henry IV is the responsibility of rulers and subjects. There is no unique concept of political thought; the play rests like all the histories on certain basic assumptions—the paradox of the fact of kingship and the sin of usurpation, the evil of rebellion, the validity of law and strong government. These were some of the assumptions of Shakespeare's time and in his history plays he dispenses them freely. But these assumptions, which stand in the foreground of his early histories, forming and constricting to their own fixed patterns the dramatic and human fluidity of the plays, are in *Henry IV* in the background—against which a much more fluent and varied drama of human relationships is played out. The history and orthodox political conceptions are modulated and deepened by a vision which adds dimensions to the flat panorama of action and idea.

Certain forces are manipulated by Shakespeare in *Henry IV* which are later to be developed with increasing assurance and subtlety. The most important of these is the use of comedy to deepen and underline the 'serious' actions of the play. It is not merely that the 'serious' action has a comic parallel—that Falstaff is, as it were, the reverse side of the political coin—but that the comic and the 'serious' are mixed so that there is a

simultaneous communication of two sides of a character, an idea, an action. Falstaff, both in what is and in what he speaks exists on two levels, one which is naturalistically involved in the action, the other which is a comment upon the action. It is through Falstaff that we, as much as Hal, are 'educated' to take a closer look at the play's issues. He is too involved and too forceful in his individuality to be a true Fool, but he has in him much which Shakespeare later used in the making of his Fools: the sense of comic isolation, the twin functions of his presence in the play. Like the Fool he is a repository of a species of truth, with the vital difference that whereas the true Fool is not called upon to 'prove' his truth, Falstaff cannot help doing so—he has not got the isolated neutrality of Touchstone, Feste and Lear's Fool. They can, by their isolation, which is complete, 'cleanse the foul body of th' infected world' without being questioned, for they are not involved deeply with the world they cleanse. Falstaff, through his unconscious 'education' of Hal, helps to cleanse the foul body of Henry IV's infected world only at the expense of his own destruction.

In the creation of Hal may be seen the seeds of a conception of character whose first obvious flowering is in Hamlet—the secretive inward-looking temperament in opposition to an external world; the clash between a notion of private purpose and that of public destiny. In Hal the conception is in its infancy, the opposition is not so violent because both private and public destinies are consanguineous; it is not, as in Hamlet, a matter of two utterly different orders of belief and reality in violent opposition. Yet the clash is here, and the nature of its communication has similarities. Like Hal, Hamlet puts on a disposition, like Hal his motive is to disguise his purposes, like Hal he tries to learn by observation, like Hal there is a histrionic flavour in the assumption of his chosen role.

In *Henry IV* the interplay of natural and political, of comic and serious, of private and public, not only suggests the emergence of new dimensions in Shakespeare's plays, but makes of history much more than a chronicle tapestry. It implies an attitude towards the dramatic presentation of life that sees things not in terms of one-dimensional historical narrative, varied by dissociated areas of comic and tragic action and character, but strictly as a unity of comical-tragical-historical.

Note

First Edition. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was first printed in 1600 as 'A Midsummer nights dreame. As it hath beene sundry times publickely acted, by the Right honourable, the Lord Chamberlaine his servants. Written by William Shakespeare.' The play was mentioned by Meres in 1598.

Modern Editions. Pending publication of the New Arden edition in preparation by Arthur Brown, the most authoritative edition is that of the New Cambridge (1924, reprinted 1949), edited by Sir A. Quiller-Couch and J. Dover Wilson. Of especial interest for the context of the following chapter is the volume devoted to this play by Granville-Barker in *The Players' Shakespeare* (1923).

Studies of Shakespeare's Plays in Performance. Muriel St. C. Byrne has discussed past productions in *A History of Shakespearian Production in England: 1700-1800* (1948), and 'Fifty Years of Shakespearian Production, 1898-1948', *Shakespeare Survey* (1949). C. B. Hogan's *Shakespeare in the Theatre, 1701-1800* (2 vols., 1957) is a record of performances in London theatres. Both *Shakespeare Survey* and *Shakespeare Quarterly* provide annual reviews of current productions. A. C. Sprague's *Shakespeare and the Actors* (1944) is relevant, and there is a brief Stage History of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the New Cambridge edition, but only to 1935.

W. M. Merchant's *Shakespeare and the Artist* (1959) employs the history of paintings, engravings and stage-settings of Shakespeare as a medium of criticism, and this is the concern of the following chapter.

VIII

'A Midsummer Night's Dream' *A Visual Re-creation*

W. MOELWYN MERCHANT



'WHAT a wedding present! . . . there is the fitness of the fable, the play's whole tone and atmosphere, the appropriate ending.' Few have found it necessary to quarrel with Granville-Barker's estimate of the play's suitability as an epithalamium. It was Quiller-Couch's conviction that 'the play must have been intended for *some* courtly marriage. It has all the *stigmata*.' Yet the '*stigmata*' are also present of a life altogether darker than the apparent grace of the fairy world. Spenser had set the source in his *Epithalamion*:

Ne let the Pouke, nor other evill sprights . . .
Fray us with things that be not.

The permanent possibility that the forces of evil irrationality will burst upon the seemly dance of matrimony is sustained to the end of the play. At the faintly ominous afterthought of Theseus, 'Lovers to bed,—*'tis almost fairy time*', Puck catalogues the terrors of the night, closing the list with a declaration of his and his fellows' dark allegiance:

And we fairies, that do run
By the triple Hecate's team,
From the presence of the sun,
Following darkness like a dream,
Now are frolic.

(V. i. 390)

Moonlight may be enchanting at the Globe, but it is a properly fitful illumination for those whose allegiance is to the '*diva triformis*', to Hecate whose quality of ill-omen Blake alone had the spiritual insight to penetrate in actual drawing.

Nor is 'the play's whole tone and atmosphere' so uniformly gracious as to be wholly reassuring. The innocence of Perdita's passion is rarely heard in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play opens with a ravishment

disguised in the oblique courtesy, 'I wooed thee with my sword'; the fairy and human worlds are mutually involved in the sour recriminations of knowledgeable lust:

How canst thou thus for shame, Titania,
Glance at my credit with Hippolyta,
Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?
Didst not thou lead him through the glimmering night
From Perigenia, whom he ravished?

(II. i. 74)

These are the momentary but important undertones which establish the complex maturity of the play. It is no decorative confection. Whether presented as 'festive comedy' in the sophisticated elaboration of private masque, or with the resources in music and spectacle of the public theatres, it demanded the fullest range of visual conceits of which Elizabethan theatre-craft was capable. Its subsequent theatrical history and its treatment at the hands of engravers and painters has been strangely various, reflecting a critical uncertainty about some of its themes. To trace this history in outline is an instructive exercise in the vagaries of critical taste.

* * *

The fate of the play at the Restoration seemed uncertain. It fell to Killigrew in the division of the patent rights and on 29 September 1662 it appeared to Pepys in performance to be 'the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life. I saw, I confess, some good dancing, and some handsome women, which was all my pleasure.' Thirty years were to pass before *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reached its full stature as opera. In 1692 Tonson published *The Fairy Queen*, Betterton's anonymous libretto for Purcell's opera. Its manipulation of the Shakespearian plot and poetry has been frequently and caustically treated, but in the history of theatre décor it has great interest. Earlier in the century the great Giacomo Torelli had designed the settings for Corneille's *Andromède* at the Petit-Bourbon; the designs survive in a set of engravings at the Bibliothèque Nationale, from which the setting for Act II is reproduced here (Pl. 1a). When we come to examine the stage directions of *The Fairy Queen*, there are so many remarkable parallels that I have no doubt that Torelli's designs were copied for the production of Purcell's opera. Before this debt is examined in detail, we can first establish the ground plan of the production, for it is clearly based on a simplification of the permanent setting at the Teatro Olimpico, Vicenza. In Act II we learn

that the setting for *The Fairy Queen* is 'a prospect of Grottos, Arbors, and delightful Walks' and later that 'the Arbors on either side of the scene' are 'of a great length whose prospect runs towards the two angles of the House'. If these requirements be compared with the lay-out of the stage at the Teatro Olimpico (and their implications we shall see confirmed in the designs by Torelli for *Andromède*) the two ground-plans are these:

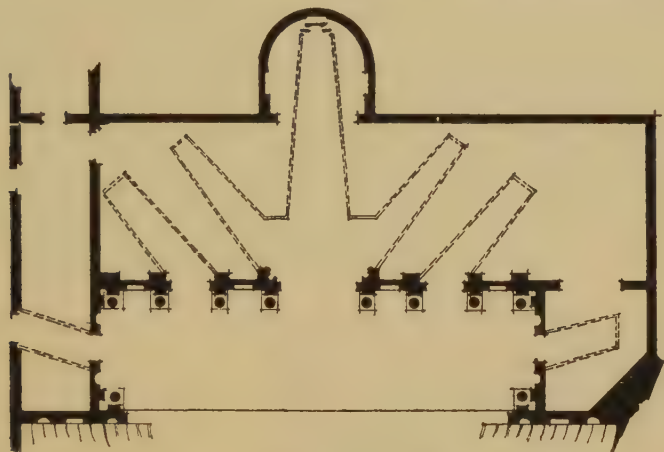


FIG. 1. The Stage of the Teatro Olimpico
(Reproduced by kind permission of the Oxford University Press)

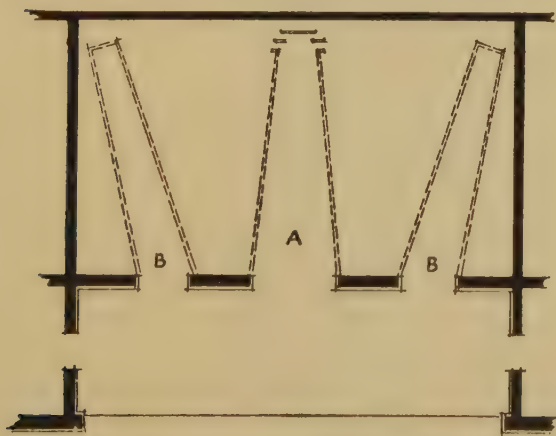


FIG. 2. Stage plan for *The Fairy Queen*
(Reproduced by kind permission of the
Oxford University Press)

If on these ground-plans we impose the stage directions for *The Fairy Queen* and relate them to the Torelli engravings, the full extent of the borrowing becomes clear. In Act II 'the Arbors are adorned with all variety of Flowers, the Grottos supported by Termes'. The latter are caryatids supporting pediments, and they may be seen in the engraving in Pl. 1a, above the ornamental fountains on each side of the central avenue. Further in Act II there is a 'great Grotto, which is continued by several Arches to the further end of the House' (i.e. to the back of the stage); this is the central feature in the *Andromède* engraving. In Act V 'the scene changes to a Garden of Fountains . . . enrich'd with gilding, and adorn'd with Statues . . . Before the Trees stand rows of Marble Columns'. All these features are derived from the Torelli engravings, the 'termes', the *putti* at the watersprings, the trees in their large earthenware pots. These last are defined more precisely in Act V and again Torelli may be seen to provide the exact original: 'Six pedestals of China-work rise from under the Stage; they support six large vases of Porcelain, in which are six China-Orange Trees'. This close faithfulness, even to the variety of the trees, is a probable indication of an even greater deference to the French and Italian tradition of operatic setting than we have hitherto attributed even to the more elaborate Restoration versions of Shakespeare. The immediate interest to us is the degree of falsification undergone by the complex tones of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* through this translation into an alien visual tradition. The dances arranged for the opera by Josiah Priest were probably not incongruously set to the music of Purcell, with whom he frequently collaborated; but the visual art of Torelli was of a very different temper.

We are unusually fortunate in the materials we have for re-creating interpretation and setting of the play in the first half of the eighteenth century. This is due to the happy chance of the survival of a Hogarth painting (though in a bad state of preservation), and to the mutual illumination provided by the two frontispieces to the Rowe editions of Shakespeare, published by Jacob Tonson in 1709 and 1714. As we frequently find in these two editions, the engraving in 1714 was based on that of 1709 but it is unusually sensitive in its drawing. Titania and Oberon approach the fairy ring in the centre of a moon-lit glade. The fairies are in no way 'little people' but a stately court of human stature. Both frontispieces illustrate a masque performance in contemporary costume and with unusually dramatic lighting. The source of the fairy conflict is also clearly marked in the figure of the Indian Boy and Titania's formal gesture in his direction (Pl. 1b).



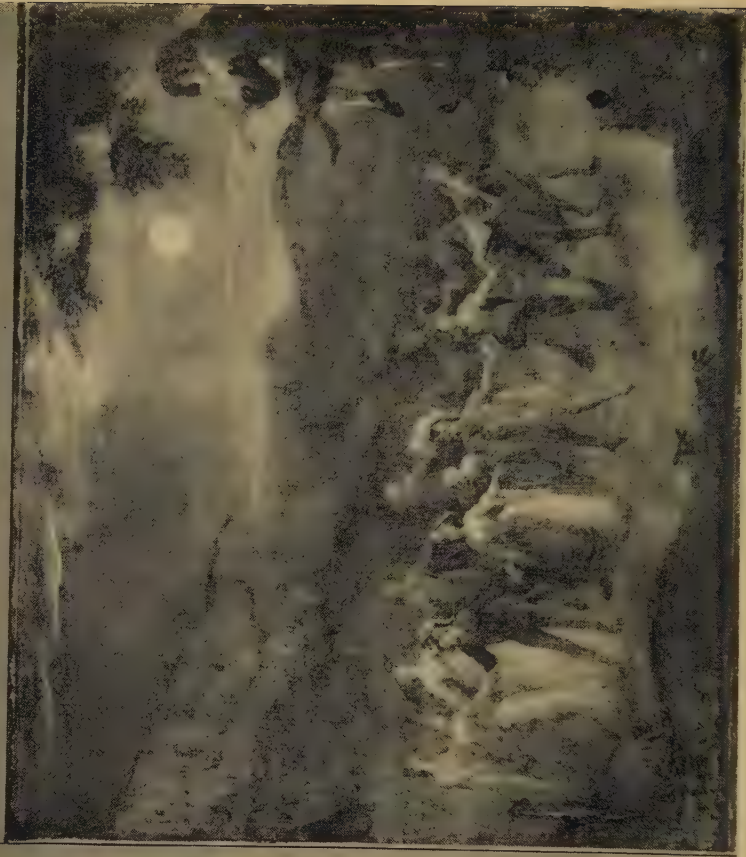
1a

Giacomo Torelli
Design for Corneille's
Andromède, 1650 (Biblio-
thèque Nationale, Paris)



1b

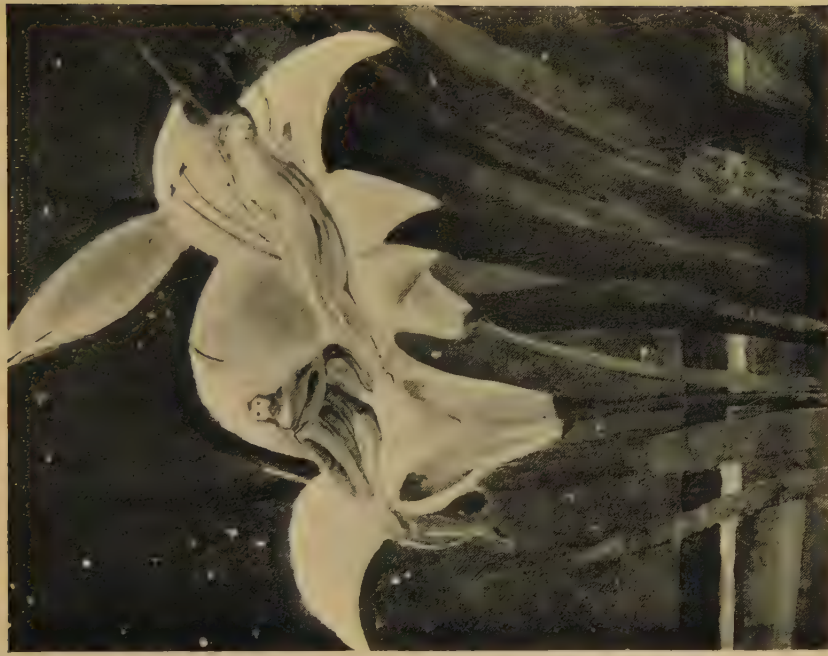
Frontispiece to
A Midsummer Night's Dream,
from Rowe's *Shakespeare*,
1709



2 William Hogarth: Scene from Purcell's *Fairy Queen* (known as 'Fairies Dancing' and 'The Alarm')
(By kind permission of Major A. S. C. Broune)



3a Francis Hayman: Drawing for frontispiece in Hamner's *Shakespeare*, 1744 (*Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington*)



3b William Blake: Oberon and Titania (Coll. Philip Hofer, *Harvard*)



4a Gordon: A Wood near Athens, a design for Charles Kean, 1856
(Victoria & Albert Museum)



4b John Piper: Setting for Benjamin Britten's opera, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1960-61

The choice of this scene sets a pleasant problem of interpretation. Is this a rendering of the artist's ideal performance of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* (there was no actual performance in his day to illustrate), or is it a recollection of Purcell's *Fairy Queen*? If the latter, then it is not impossible that an important gap in our knowledge of its décor (and hence of 'Restoration Shakespeare') is here filled in. For we have already been able to deduce the settings for the transformation scenes in the 1692 performance with tolerable accuracy, but for the main set we have only the brief indication of the stage direction in the published text: 'a wood by moonlight' before the scene changes to 'A prospect of Grotto's, Arbors and delightful Walks'. In the 1709/14 frontispieces we have perhaps this 'wood by moonlight', providing in its picturesque irregularity, a stimulating contrast to the formal symmetry of Torelli's drawings adopted so fully in the 1692 production. Some such counterbalancing of idyllic landscape with formal set-pieces is clearly the intention of the 1692 stage directions and it seems safe to assume that in these Tonson frontispieces and the Torelli engravings we have probably our richest surviving material for re-creating a Restoration performance of Shakespeare.

Later confirmation comes from the fortunate and unlikely source already mentioned, the painting by Hogarth. Lawrence Gowing (*Burlington Magazine* (Jan. 1953), 'Hogarth, Hayman, and the Vauxhall Decorations') identifies the painting, 'Fairies Dancing', now in the collection of Major A. S. C. Browne, as a work by Hogarth and probably painted for Vauxhall Gardens (reproduced here at Pl. 2). It seems to me probable (and Lawrence Gowing agrees) that here we have another interpretation of *The Fairy Queen*. There are three main areas of interest in the picture. The central dance of the fairies has a flexible vigour superior to any earlier Shakespearian illustration; to the left, in a panel now detached from the main canvas, is a figure which Gowing describes as a commonplace in Hogarth's compositions—here it seems clearly to represent Moonshine. Quince's astonished forward thrust of the lantern in order to see the fairies more clearly, when they are already brilliantly lit by moonlight, is wholly in Hogarth's range of satire. Finally, the piping figure in the tree on the right is almost certainly Puck; he accompanies the masque while keeping aloof from the courtly dance. Hogarth's rare attempts to interpret Shakespeare, his Falstaff, Henry VIII, Richard III, are the most illuminating pieces of visual criticism we have in the first half of the eighteenth century; this painting, a link between Shakespeare's text and the elaboration of operatic setting and interpretation,

is one of the most important of those that survive. It is a profound pity that its survival has been so precarious and undocumented.

Most of the obloquy for adapting Shakespeare—'making fitt'—has been poured on the Restoration period. In fact a just appreciation of Restoration standards, their integrity within their clearly stated aesthetic limits, would at least concede them the attempt, if mistaken, to frame Shakespeare's genius within the neo-classical rules and to add to his art the visual perspectives and the musical comment of the baroque theatre. No such excuse can be made for the eighteenth century. The ideals which animated Dryden had been attenuated if not wholly lost by the age of Garrick. The decisions to rewrite the text of *Lear* and *Coriolanus* were governed not so much by aesthetic proprieties as by the expedient argument concerning the eighteenth-century audience's capacity to attend to Shakespeare's complexity. Paradoxically enough, two of the comedies, *The Winter's Tale* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, suffered more than even the great tragedies from the age's inability to enjoy two or more modes of theatrical presentation at once; these two plays suffer from an identical failure in sensibility from Cibber's day until Kemble's. *The Winter's Tale* provides a convenient introduction to our consideration of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A mature criticism, reflected in theatre presentation to-day, recognizes in the pastoral theme in the fourth act a redemptive principle intervening in the tragic relationship between Leontes and Hermione. Yet the eighteenth century persistently saw in the fourth act a separate pastoral romance, achieving total independence in 1754 as *The Sheep-Shearing or Florisel and Perdita* (produced with music by Arne in 1761). The fastidious temper which led to this isolation of the Bohemian scenes may be judged in Hayman's engraving for Hanmer's edition in 1744, rococo illustration at its best. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presented the eighteenth century with an even more puzzling complexity. They recognized some tenuous connections between the strife among the human lovers and the fairy conflicts, but Bottom's mechanicals, they felt, surely inhabited another world. This was the assumption of the operatic version quarried from the play and a fragmentation exactly similar to that suffered by *The Winter's Tale* resulted.

It is difficult to examine these versions with useful gravity; two must suffice, Leveridge's *Comick Masque of Pyramus and Thisbe* in 1716 and Garrick's *The Fairies* in 1755. The former was a comic operetta devised to satirize the italianate opera in contemporary London and was brief enough both to provide an epilogue to *Timon of Athens* (as Purcell's *Dido* had already provided interludes for *Measure for Measure*) and to give the

duke in *As You Like It* a suitable entertainment in the Forest of Arden. By its isolation from the rest of the plot, the clownish attempt at the performance of Pyramus and Thisbe loses any overtone of romantic love, its precise parody of the tragic ironies in *Romeo and Juliet* is wholly lost, and in its farcical tone it ceases to make any comment on the irrationality of passionate love. To the same degree Garrick's *The Fairies*, deprived of the mechanicals, loses its relevance and becomes an oratorio for children. Of these depredations there is little evidence in the way of drawing or engraving, except the frontispiece to the play in Hanmer's *Shakespeare* in 1744. The original drawings by Hayman (engraved for the edition by Gravelot) have all survived in an extra-illustrated set in the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, and the drawing is reproduced here (Pl. 3a). It is one of Hayman's best compositions, assimilating the French tradition to English book illustration. Here the Athenian setting has provided him with exceptional opportunities. The woodland scene, with the buildings of Athens in the background, has attractive overtones of an ideal landscape by Claude to provide the foil to the terror of the company at Bottom's transformation. This is not the last time that hints from Claude provide suggestions for setting the play.

There is little to interest us in frontispiece illustration until the end of the century, though two of the Bell publications have engravings which deserve attention: the edition of 1773 contains one of Edwards's rigid compositions with the customary crude vigour which he shows in his illustrations for Bell; the second, one of the 'Dramatick Character' plates from the serial edition of 1773/6, is the splendidly operatic costume-piece, 'Mrs. Barsanti as Helena', recalling the production of the previous half-century. With the opening of the Boydell venture interpretation of the play entered a more creative phase. The works of greatest interest were provided by two very different talents, Fuseli and Reynolds. The latter had supported Alderman Boydell, in his scheme to illustrate all the works of Shakespeare in a great gallery, because this was a ready means to stimulate a native school of History Painting. It is not surprising therefore that his own main contributions were a magnificent 'Macbeth and the Witches' and the 'Death of Cardinal Beaufort', indebted to one of Poussin's finest compositions, 'The Death of Germanicus'. Much more surprising was his decision to illustrate *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with a bold portrait of Puck. It is a disturbing picture, with more than a hint of cruelty in the squatting figure, a strange and perhaps unconscious insight into this aspect of the play. Reynolds was paid a thousand guineas for each of the Boydell canvases and painting on this scale, based on A

Midsummer Night's Dream, would normally, one would assume, take him to the more heroic episodes of Theseus and Hippolita. This rendering of Puck shows an area of experience otherwise little explored by Reynolds.

The fairy world was of course a natural choice for Fuseli's fantastic genius. The very large painting in the Tate Gallery, 'Titania and Bottom in the Wood' (33½ by 107½ inches) is sardonically conceived; the fairies, when they are of human stature, are heroic parodies of his courtesan drawings, while the little figures suggest petty cruelties and small obscenities which pervade the fairy world with their corruption. The picture of a later scene in the play, 'Oberon awaking Titania' in the Winterthur Kunstmuseum, pursues interpretation of Bottom's dream into Fuseli's customary world of vision: over the head of Bottom asleep hovers the figure of Nightmare ridden by one of Titania's elves. Internal strife, a refinement of lust in conflict, a determination to bedevil human passion, all these motives are available to the febrile world of Fuseli's fairy kingdom. In September 1799 Boydell published a further drawing by Fuseli, engraved by James Parker: Puck rides down the sky, a whip-lash of stars and comets attached to his right forefinger, his left hand extended with projecting first and fourth fingers, suggesting both Bottom's ass-ears and the sign of cuckoldry; below him and to his left, small figures decline into sub-human grotesques. This was frequently if roughly copied in engravings for many years and may well have stimulated the mild Kenny Meadows to produce the horrifying clawed Puck of his drawing in 1845; even Noel Paton and Landseer, engaged in their larger canvases of Titania's train, show more than a hint of the unhealthy proliferation of creatures in Fuseli's works.

For the 1805 Rivington *Shakespeare* Rhodes engraved a simpler drawing by Fuseli, in which Titania is a grave courtesan, sardonically attended; but his strangest illustration of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* appears under the imprint, 'as the Act directs, Dec^r 23^d 1806 Royal Academy London'. The central figure clearly recollects the Puck of the 1799 Boydell drawing but the caption reads: *Frier Puck, L' Allegro* and quotes:

as when a wand'ring vice
Which oft they say some evil Spirit attends,

a significantly imperfect recollection of *Paradise Lost*, IX, 634-44;

As when a wandring Fire
Compact of unctuous vapor, which the Night
Condenses, and the cold invirons round,

Kind'led through agitation to a Flame,
Which oft, they say, some evil Spirit attends,
Hovering and blazing with delusive Light,
Misleads th' amaz'd Night-wanderer from his way
To Boggs and Mires, and oft through Pond or Poole,
There swallowed up and lost, from succour farr.
So glisterd the dire Snake, and with fraud
Led *Eve* our credulous Mother . . .

The parallel here with the night-wandering iniquities of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, reinforced by the more dire relation to the Fall, evidently attracted the speculative and theological side of Fuseli, while *L'Allegro* in the caption to his picture refers back to the lines in Milton's poem (ll. 104-112):

And he by Friars Lanthorn led
Tells how the drudging *Goblin* sweet . . .
Then lies him down the Lubbar Fend,
And stretch'd out all the Chimney's length,
Basks at the fire his hairy strength.

For Milton, as for Fuseli, 'Friar' carries the overtones of evil imaginings popularly associated with Franciscans from Roger Bacon onward and including Marlowe's more acceptable guise for Mephistophilis, 'Go and return an old Franciscan Friar'. Fuseli's picture, with its caption and allusive quotation, admirably summarizes the complexities in which Puck involves both critic and painter.

Blake was not invited to contribute to the Boydell Gallery but he made three remarkably penetrating studies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, important to an understanding of his own art and central to the interpretation of the play. The composition of the relatively large drawing in the Tate Gallery, 'Oberon, Titania, Puck and the Fairies', suggests on the one hand the rhythms of the dance of joy in his 'L'Allegro', a design for Milton's poem, now in the Pierpont Morgan Library; to the left, the two hieratic figures of Oberon and Titania share the restored tranquillity of the fifth act of the play; the sharp elf-features of Puck participate in the same innocence and the total design carries none of the more sinister suggestions to which Blake's contemporaries seem to have responded so readily. Closely associated with this larger composition is a drawing in the collection of Philip Hofer at Harvard (discussed at Pl. 29a in *Shakespeare and the Artist*); it is called 'Oberon and Titania reclining' and appears in a smaller version in the text of *The Song of Los*. Two fairy figures of diminutive nobility rest in a lily blossom, and

Laurence Binyon points out that this cryptic drawing has been interpreted as 'the King and Queen of the Fairies (natural joys) in the Lily of Havilah'. If the fairy rulers are indeed to be equated with the potent 'natural joys', then the relation with the ecstatic dance in the Tate Gallery drawing is the more significant and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* plays a consistent part in Blake's mythology; for the fairy world is involved in the search for tranquillity and lost innocence which is a major aspect of the lovers' anguish in their nocturnal forest. (Pl. 3b)

It would have been immeasurably valuable if Blake had been commissioned (or been moved more consistently) to illustrate *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on the scale of his Milton or Dante drawings. As it is we have only the two drawings already considered, counterpointed by the sombre 'Triple Hecate', based on Puck's closing lines, which have not received the attention they deserve:

Now it is the time of night
 That the graves all gaping wide,
 Every one lets forth his sprite,
 In the church-way paths to glide:
 And we fairies, that do run
 By the triple Hecate's team,
 From the presence of the sun,
 Following darkness like a dream,
 Now are frolic . . .

Blake has gathered into his colour print a relation of symbols which suggests all the dark references with which Shakespeare consistently endowed Hecate: the 'triple Hecate' of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the presiding evil of *Macbeth*, Lear's cursing Cordelia by 'the mysteries of Hecate and the night' and the murder of the Player in *Hamlet* by means of a

Mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
 With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected.

In Blake's drawing, the owl, bat, toad and donkey are characteristic familiars of a witches' world, while he subtly depicts the tripartite form of Hecate herself as tragic rather than evil. In the catalogue for the Blake Exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1957 Martin Butlin adds an important suggestion: 'This is probably a companion print to 'Pity' (*Macbeth*) . . . The two subjects were probably chosen to show two aspects of the place of woman in the Fall. The triple representation of the Infernal Goddess is a traditional symbol of the three phases of the moon, crescent, full

and waning.' The power of the triple Hecate invoked by Puck and illuminated by Blake with this suggestion of the Fall, is certainly counter to the joyful innocence sought by the lovers and ultimately granted both by human and supernatural authority. No other artist has ventured upon so many suggestions of the evil undertones in the play's structure; to recognize its place in the rhythm of the Fall and Redemption, of disorder and tranquil charity, was certainly, in Rossetti's phrase describing this colour-print, 'in Blake's special range of power'.

Romantic artists appear comparatively rarely to have handled themes from the play, though late in his life Turner painted the elaborate 'Queen Mab's Grotto' (exhibited at the British Institution in 1846). A contemporary newspaper account in the Forrest collection in the Birmingham Public Library (but unfortunately unidentified) notes that 'when exhibited it was accompanied by lines from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—"Frisk it, frisk it by the moonlight beams"—and also by the platitude from that wonderful manuscript poem of Turner, "The Fallacies of Hope"—"Thy orgies Mab, are manifold"'.

Messrs. Hurst, Robinson had meanwhile (in 1825) published a series of small engravings by the much lesser romantic, Smirke. These are vigorous but conventional enough in their reading of the play; but one is a notable departure from the usual interpretation of Bottom: his awakening from the dream shows a young, hirsute and powerful figure, delighted with his recollection of the dream world and quite unlike the ponderous and ostentatious 'ham actor' of the earlier engravings.

Little further light is shed on the play by Romantic artists and it is a great pity that no actor capable of giving a distinguished rendering of either Theseus or Bottom appeared in the period. The critics found it a characteristic subject for the antithesis between imaginative and theatrical fact; Hazlitt forthrightly declared: 'The *ideal* has no place upon the stage, which is a picture without perspective; everything there is in the foreground. That which is merely an airy shape, a dream, a passing thought, immediately becomes an unmanageable reality.' This was a customary attitude for those who could have little understanding of the theatrical discipline to which the Jacobean dramatist subjected himself; these critics saw the plays as extended vehicles for poetic ideas only, an attitude which survives in the romantic insistence to-day that Shakespeare wrote dramatic poems and not plays. In this essay in *The Examiner* in January 1816, however, Hazlitt had more justice in his assertion. For he was criticizing a particularly unfortunate production under J. P. Kemble's direction at Covent Garden. The operatic text had been prepared by

Frederic Reynolds and the music arranged by Henry Bishop 'to introduce the Original Musick Composed by *Arne, Battishill, and Smith*, with additions by *Handel, Dr. Cooke, Stevens, &c.*' The scenery was prepared by six artists, including Grieve and Hollagan, with separate 'credits' for those who directed the 'Machinery', the 'Decorations', the 'Dresses' and the 'Dances'. The playbill describes some effects which return directly to the masques of the seventeenth century. In the second set,

Clouds having ascended, the Sea is discovered. A Fairy Palace in the distance. Titania's galley and other gallies in full sail. Dance, during which the Indian Boy is brought forward.

The customary transference of the play of *Pyramus and Thisbe* to the middle of the action is again assumed in this production to make way for the tableau of the 'triumphs of Theseus'. In its course we are shown 'The Cretans, the Amazons, the Centaurs, the Minotaur, Ariadne in the Labyrinth, the Mysterious Peplum or Veil of Minerva, the Ship *Argo*, and the Golden Fleece'. It was immensely popular but in face of this guide-book particularity there is substance in Hazlitt's declaration that 'we have found to our cost, once for all, that the regions of fancy, and the boards of Covent-Garden are not the same thing'.

This production ended merely spectacular exploitation of the text for over a generation. With Mme. Vestris's employment of J. W. Planché to design the production in 1840 and Phelps's notable direction of the play at Sadler's Wells in 1853, the new scenic resources of the theatre were used with discrimination. The Vestris production was notable for the imaginative use of the *diorama* (usually a backcloth of considerable length, wound on and off rollers at the side of the stage; sometimes used in counter-movement with shutters or with other backcloths). It was especially effective in Act III where the machinery is described for the first scene: 'Moonlight—transparent wood—platform colored and rising ground, crossing from the back, R. Water pieces joining it and running off L.' The *diorama* was to be used by Kean for pageantry at the Princess's but its employment for atmospheric landscape, combined with a new confidence in the manipulation of light, makes the productions of Mme. Vestris and Phelps momentous in the history of décor. Henry Morley is clearly describing a *diorama* in his account of Phelps's production: 'There is no ordinary scene shifting; but, as in dreams, one scene is made to glide insensibly into another. We followed the lovers and the fairies through the wood, from glade to glade, now among trees, now with a broad view of the sea and Athens in the distance.'

Phelps, it is clear, was basing his whole production upon his reading of 'Bottom's Dream'; the sense of infinite recession in dream states is admirably captured in Henry Morley's description (*Journal of a London Playgoer*) of Phelps's performance:

We miss the humour and we get a strange, elaborate, and uncouth dream-figure, a clown restless with vanity, marked by a score of little movements, and speaking ponderously with the uncouth gesticulation of an unreal thing, a grotesque nightmare figure . . . [Later] the dream figure is dreamy, there is a dream within a dream; Bottom is quiet; his humour becomes more unctuous, but Bottom is translated. He accepts all that happens quietly as dreamers do.

The account of the setting in *The Times* of 10 October 1833 wholly substantiates this interpretation of Phelps's rendering of the play, as manifold dream states within the qualified reality of Theseus's heroic Athens:

While the palace of Theseus is elaborately 'set' and the places in which the fairy action takes place are represented by a series of landscapes [the diorama], we may especially mention a new, but simple expedient, of giving an aerial appearance to the lightsome creatures of the poet's brain. The front of the stage is according to custom covered with green cloth; a greenish hue is cast upon the scene by the *media* placed before the lights; the lustre of the chandeliers in the *salle* is subdued or extinguished; and the fairies, merely by being dressed in garments of a blueish or greenish tint so completely blend with the general hue of the scene, that they have all that approach to semi-invisibility, which is usually obtained by the grosser expedient of gauze, and the effect is singularly beautiful.

This passage is part of a long and penetrating criticism, and one envies both its length and the state of a theatre (and its critics) which could translate dramatic interpretation into terms of décor, and count on discriminating comment in the journals.

A rapid shift of perspective takes place between Phelps and Charles Kean, whose *Midsummer Night's Dream* was performed at the Princess's Theatre in 1853. This followed immediately upon his amazing *Winter's Tale*, where archaeology to the degree of pedantry had determined period, dress and ornament. His team of designer-researchers having been engaged on classical antiquity, it was almost inevitable that Athens rather than the Dream should have been the focus of his production. Historical scholarship had been made readily accessible in Knight's

Pictorial Shakespere which appeared in the years from 1840 onward, and in the introduction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in this edition there had been much sensible comment on the propriety with which Athenian costume and arms might be used, and the flexibility with which detail might be ignored or modified. This laxity will not do for Kean. There must be an investigation of the *mores* of Theseus's day (the architecture at that period was 'too rude in construction' to be suitable for the production at the Princess's) and other periods explored for suitable settings. The elaboration of the opening back-drop set the precise and formidable clarity of the whole production. That there might be no ambiguity the audience was confronted with 'the hill of the Acropolis, the far-famed Parthenon, the Erechtheum, and the statue of the tutelary goddess Minerva, or Athena; by its side the theatre of Bacchus in advance, the temple of Jupiter Olympus, partially hiding the hall of the Museum; and on the right, the temple of Theseus'. Judging from the detailed drawings, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, equal precision was lavished on the mechanicals and Quince's workshop is as close-packed a set as we find in the whole range of Kean's management of the Princess's. Against this Greek background the fairies look decidedly English, in the tradition of romantic ballet, modified by garlands and dancing around very ornate maypoles (Morley strikes them off in an admirable phrase: 'glittering in the most brilliant dresses, with a crust of bullion about their legs').

The team of artists for this production was rather smaller than Kean had recently been employing; it consisted of Grieves, Lloyds and Cuthbert, with George Gordon who contributed not only the detail of Quince's workshop but also supplemented Grieve's 'Moving Diorama' with a 'Wood near Athens, Moonlight', an adaptation of a Turner landscape in the Tate Gallery (Pl. 4a). It is probable that neither the artist nor the audience recognized the potent allusiveness, the suggestions unconsciously conveyed by this transference of scene from Athens to the Claudian landscape of Turner's Lake Nemi.

The play was rarely produced and with little distinction, for the remainder of the century, with the exception of the Meininger production, which, judging from illustrations, had an exceptionally dignified Theseus. Frank Benson first appeared in London in 1889 with a strangely elaborate and injudicious production, and Beerbohm Tree's in 1900 still appears to bemuse recollection—though it is clear that remembrances of its live rabbits and flocks of sparrows do injustice to the pains taken with the scenes and the motives for this elaboration. The artists of the Victorian

age produced many sentimentalities from the play; Sir J. Noel Paton however showed a prolific invention in his 'Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania' in the National Gallery of Scotland, with the temper of a chastely mild Fuseli.

But the tide at the turn of the century was set against spectacle. Gordon Craig was demonstrating that the suggestiveness of tall curtain pillars, massive steps and imaginative shifts of light did more to establish a predominant mood than the most lavish care with precise detail. With Craig's virtual exile from the English theatre it remained for Granville-Barker to destroy the nineteenth-century modes. We have especially ample materials for examining Granville-Barker's aims and their realization. In 1914-15 he produced *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Savoy and this, with *The Winter's Tale* (a curious recollection of their conjunction under Charles Kean's direction) was to be his test for the translation of spectacle and atmosphere to the terms of his own theatre. The critic in the *Daily Telegraph* found clarity and simplicity its most notable qualities, 'the apron stage, the decorative curtains for background and only two set scenes'. The two artists with whom he collaborated, Norman Wilkinson and Albert Rutherston, continued his manner under later directors (Norman Wilkinson was active during the admirable direction of Stratford from 1919 to 1934 by Bridges-Adams, with *The Dream* as one of the final productions) but the most immediate confirmation of Granville-Barker's ideas came with the production of *The Players' Shakespeare* in 1923, a tercentenary celebration of the First Folio. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is one of the most splendid of the volumes and Granville-Barker was magnificently seconded in projecting his ideas by the drawings of Paul Nash. The introduction is Granville-Barker at his most recalcitrantly Elizabethan, steadfastly against any realism of setting and imaginatively recreating a possible production in an Elizabethan mansion. But the drawings of Paul Nash relax the argumentative tone of the volume. They manifestly reflect the earlier Savoy production, the designs in every way the product of that most fruitful (and rare) collaboration between an artist of integrity and a producer who knows both the text and his own mind. The illustrations are in two groups, a set of wood engravings which establish the main lines of interpretation, followed by delicate toned wash drawings. There are moments of acute insight: in place of a pedantic classicism the Athenian suggestion is carried solely by exaggerated vertical lines with simple horizontal pediments; the fairies are small grotesques identified in cousinly fashion with lower animal life, with Puck and the directing intelligences poised in

costumes which suggest flower corolas; the trees are simple cylinders and theatre flats, with branches and fronds painted in formal patterns on the curved surfaces (a like assimilation of ideal setting and theatrical machinery was achieved by Edward Bawden in drawings, with Eric Ravilious, for *The Tempest* a generation later; two figures are reproduced in *Shakespeare and the Artist*, figs. 42 and 44). The wash drawings have



FIG. 3. Paul Nash, 'I am that merry wanderer', *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, The Players' Shakespeare, 1923

the insubstantial tones of a landscape dreamt and not realized. Especially effective are the woodscenes which have been imagined with different accents and intensities of colour, corresponding to a change of lighting in a theatre production (Fig. 3).

To pursue this interpretation in published work: The Folio Society edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* spans the war years; published in 1957, with an introduction by Sir Ralph Richardson, it records the Old Vic productions of December 1937 and December 1938, directed by Tyrone Guthrie with Oliver Messel's designs (Sir Ralph Richardson playing Bottom, Miss Vivien Leigh Titania and Robert Helpmann

Oberon). It was visually charming but not distinguished; Richardson's introduction describes the atmosphere 'of enchantment and gaiety which unifies the diverse elements' and these include 'touches of malevolence'. This dissident quality is lightly stressed in the costume designs, the sinister brooding Oberon, classical and antlered, in the fox-sprite of the frontispiece and the monkey-figure of Puck.

Interpretation of the play in the theatre in our day has ranged from the direct simplicity of Ronald Watkins's production with the boys of Harrow School to the sophisticated elaboration of Neville Coghill's production at the Haymarket in 1945. This brilliant and moving presentation (with Sir John Gielgud as Oberon and Dame Peggy Ashcroft as Titania) wedded the visual formality of an Inigo Jones masque to a scholarly reading of the play which stressed the dignified antipathies of the fairy world. Hal Burton's décor and more particularly his handling of the costumes suggested the very full debt which Shakespeare and his contemporaries undoubtedly owed in plays of this temper to the masque of their day. This same debt was emphasized in the operatic tradition in 1946, when Constant Lambert revived *The Fairy Queen* at Covent Garden with Michael Ayrton's designs; these sets and costumes, avowedly returning to the manner of Inigo Jones, produced a witty conflation of Jacobean and Restoration styles, a creative use of pastiche too rarely attempted in Shakespearian setting. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is peculiarly suited to it, and this humble leaning on an earlier creativity would save us some of the banalities to which Stratford has recently subjected us.

The Fairy Queen is frank adaptation and Purcell has been followed in our day by two adapters of very different temper (examined by John Russell Brown in an article in *Shakespeare Survey*, 1960). In 1933 Max Reinhardt produced the play in the open-air at South Park, Headington, so altering the text that it was 'no longer . . . a story of mortals in this world behind whom an enchantment has arisen . . . [but] a tale of sprites and goblins pursuing the natural life of their own dwelling-place, into which men and women have blindly wandered' (J. R. Brown quoting *The Times* review of 16 June 1933). In 1939 *Swinging the Dream* was produced in New York, 'the scene changed to New Orleans in the 1880s; the cast of two hundred included Louis Armstrong as Bottom, Maxine Sullivan as Titania and the Dandridge Sisters as three fairies; the scenery was inspired by Walt Disney and there were three bands, including the Benny Goodman Sextet'. Purcell and the Restoration went no further than this.

Last year's Aldeburgh Festival saw the latest adaptation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to the operatic stage, with Benjamin Britten's music and settings by John Piper (first produced on 11 June 1960). These two close friends have collaborated in almost every one of Britten's operas; by this time there is no question of settings applied later at the direction of a producer, adding an alien dimension to the text and music; from the beginning it is a unified creation. As an indication of the integrity with which it was planned Britten may be quoted (*The Observer*, 5 June 1960): 'Peter Pears (who sings Flute, the bellows-mender) and I had endless trouble with the references and proportions of the play. We stuck faithfully to Shakespeare's words, adding only one line: "Compelling thee to marry with Demetrius". We worked with many texts, but principally from facsimiles of the First Folio and the First Quarto.' From the first Britten had noted the dark undertones of the play: 'The fairies are very different from the innocent nothings that often appear in productions of Shakespeare. I have always been struck by a kind of sharpness in Shakespeare's fairies.' This quality is realized in Piper's settings. They have a dark, almost sub-marine quality, with a disconcerting trick of shifting scale and proportion; a flower suddenly takes on the giant dimensions of a tree (it may be seen happening in Pl. 4b), so that lovers and rustics are dwarfed by a dandelion head; fairies at a turn of lighting are momentarily revealed as of oak-like proportions. As gauze after gauze was drawn, plane after plane of the vision world came into focus and then receded; the whole production, in music and setting, had at once the frightening clarity of a nightmare and the blurred edges of a dream.

The forces deployed are small and clearly differentiated; as accompaniment the fairies are given harps, celesta and diminutive drums; the lovers, strings and wood-wind; Bottom and the rustics have trombones, horns, bassoons and clarinets. The whole orchestra totals twenty-eight. The voices are equally counter-posed. In the opening sequence, after a hazy cloud-drift of light across the first gauze, with a muted chromatic passage, the metallic voices of the boy-fairies are followed by the disturbing counter-tenor of Oberon; until this point neither humanity nor even sex is defined in the beings on the stage. Then follows Lysander's entry. The fairy costumes, like the forest, were in broken colours, greys, blue-greens and undefined browns; this human, virile figure of Lysander wore a sharply simplified classical-masque costume with a brilliant scarlet drape; his voice was almost arrogant in its clarity.

Within these dramatic simplicities there are sophisticated and allusive

moments. Recollections of Mendelssohn, lightly parodied in the four muted opening chords; the pulsing syncopation of the lovers' repeated theme, recalling *Tristan*; the Verdian bravura of Pyramus and Thisbe. But in all this technical virtuosity the highest moment is reached with dramatic gentleness, in the final reconciliation of the lovers. Each is given a simple ascending scale as they swear faith, with the tender realization of 'Mine own, yet not mine own'. As they are united in a complex canon, the four hands meet and are joined in brilliant light in the centre of the disturbing fairy glade, and the 'something of great constancy', towards which the play has tended, is most fully realized. It is one of the ironies of theatre history that this opera version is the richest and most faithful interpretation of Shakespeare's intentions in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that the stage has seen in our generation.



This has been a strange 'visual history', for the seemingly so popular play has had an uneasy, disjointed course on the stage. The briefest glance at a century of production in Germany reveals similar dilemmas. In 1843 it became one of Tieck's earliest declarations for a return to 'Globe-theatre conditions'; but already Mendelssohn's music had appeared and had in the course of the century established itself as a necessary context for the play's interpretation, producing an inevitable expurgation of any profounder or darker undertones. Bochum in 1954 saw a revolution in its presentation; under the direction of Sellner, with décor by Mertz, the play was set on a stage of almost bare scaffolding relieved by free-standing metal leaf-forms mounted on coiled springs. To this astringency was added the music of Carl Orff to produce a near-operatic version of sardonic distinction. We may suppose that the appearance in 1957 of Joseph Hegenbarth's *Zeichnungen zu Fünf Shakespeare-Dramen* should complete the process of purgation; for his mordant analysis is directed at least as powerfully towards a satiric examination of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as it is to heightening the horror of *Macbeth* or *Richard III*. But in any event, neither the German nor the English theatre has been able to establish even the measure of coherent tradition that some of the tragedies and comedies have commanded. It seems that the relation between fantasy and Athenian fact has been a daunting problem to resolve on the stage; where the insights have been penetrating they have been momentary, seemingly accidental and so partial as to exclude a total vision of the play. Among the artists Fuseli understood some of the darker possibilities of a capricious supernatural; Blake went a good deal

further in examining both the terror and the dignified grace of the fairy world.

In the theatre we have seen that it has received three quite different kinds of treatment. When a 'straight' performance has been attempted there has been a too frequent tendency to turn it to mere spectacular display. Where the themes have seemed too disparate for coherent treatment, as they appeared to the eighteenth century, smaller versions have been hacked out of the text. The third, operatic, tradition of *The Fairy Queen*, with its refashioning of the theme under the impulse of Purcell's creative genius, and its parallel in our own day in the work of Carl Orff and Benjamin Britten, has established the relation of certain aspects of Shakespeare's material to the visual tradition of masque and opera, while remaining more faithful to the Shakespearian text and temper than most 'straight' productions.

Yet throughout this examination one is left with the unease that the play has eluded authoritative presentation, in the theatre or on the artist's easel. While some artists have recognized the disturbing moments of irrationality, treachery and demonic power, rarely have these been seen as qualities which are transformable to order and grace. More seriously, the complexities of the dream world itself have rarely been penetrated in the course of a single performance or the bounds of one picture. In 1635 Calderon, in *La Vida es sueño* (*Life's a Dream*) gave classic expression to the spiritual ambiguities of the dreaming state, its dual status as ironic devaluation of secular life and its prefiguring of wholly spiritual existence. If life is a dream,

Si es sueño, si es vanagloria,
¿quien por vanagloria humana
pierde una gloria divina?

If life is a dream, mere illusion, why sacrifice the more glorious dream of spiritual reality to the lesser, transient dream of earth? Just a generation earlier, however, Shakespeare had penetrated even further into the dual nature of human dream. Lysander, in his tragic threnody with Hermia, bewails the caprice in the nature of things that makes even true love ('a sympathy in choice')

momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream.

On the other hand, Bottom's return to sober reality is not without its recollection of glory, the 'most rare vision' which he would be an ass to

expound. Yet stumblingly he attempts the exposition, recollecting his scriptural analogies as confusedly as the dream which they are intended to illuminate. Yet even the confusions are significant:

The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was.

(IV. i. 215)

The most obvious source of this shrewdly garbled quotation, I Corinthians ii, 9, is noted by the New Cambridge editors: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him'. But this is no comic verbal parallel, the maundering of a merely confused yokel; for in his triumph Bottom is prepared to search out even the Pauline 'deep things of God'—for Bottom's dream is so-called 'because it hath no bottom'. Indeed, there is more than a hint of the vision of St. John's first Epistle in his clumsy words: 'That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life.' Bottom has not been gulled in his dream; like the lovers after their nightmare confusion, vision in his waking world 'grows to something of great constancy'.

Note

First Edition. *The Merchant of Venice* was first printed (from a good, and possibly autograph, manuscript) in 1600, as 'The most excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice. With the extreame crueltie of Shylocke the Jewe towards the sayd Merchant, in cutting a just pound of his flesh: and the obtayning of Portia by the choyse of three chests. As it hath beene divers times acted by the Lord Chamberlaine his Servants.'

Modern Editions. The most recent authoritative editions are the New Cambridge by Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch and J. D. Wilson (1926) and the Arden by J. R. Brown (1955); both contain Stage-Histories. H. H. Furness' Variorum Edition (1888) also has a Stage-History, reprinting many accounts of performances and containing notes by Edwin Booth. A *Shakespeare Quarto Facsimile* of the first edition was published in 1939.

Stage-History. The role of Shylock and the style of Macklin, Kean, Irving and others may be studied in F. Gentleman, *Dramatic Censor* (1770); J. T. Kirkman, *Memoirs of Macklin* (1799); *Memoirs of Charles Macklin* (1804); G. H. Lewes, *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (1875); F. W. Hawkins, *Life of Kean* (1869); J. Doran, *Their Majesties Servants* (ed. 1897); H. H. Hillebrand, *Edmund Kean* (1933); W. Winter, *Shakespeare on the Stage* (1912); and L. Irving, *Henry Irving* (1951): the earlier of these books were mostly reprinted several times and second-hand copies are comparatively easy to find. Hazlitt's dramatic criticism and several dispersed accounts of Kean may be conveniently found in his *Works* (ed. 1930) which has an excellent index.

R. Hole's essay, 'An Apology for the Character and Conduct of Shylock' in *Essays by a Society of Gentleman, at Exeter* (1816), was an original re-appraisal of the role in theatrical terms; unfortunately the book is now rare.

B. L. Joseph's *The Tragic Actor* (1958) is a comprehensive study of English acting and well documented.

General accounts of Shakespeare's plays on the stage include G. C. D. Odell, *Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving* (1920); A. C. Sprague, *Shakespeare and the Actors: the Stage Business in his plays; 1660-1905* (1944), with a *Postscript* (1954); and Muriel St. C. Byrne, *A History of Shakespearian Production in England, Part I: 1700-1800* (1948) and 'Fifty Years of Shakespearian Production: 1898-1948', *Shakespeare Survey* (1949).

C. B. Hogan's *Shakespeare in the Theatre: 1701-1800* (1952-7) is a record of performances giving cast-lists wherever possible.

Shakespearian adaptations are considered by H. Spencer, *Shakespeare Improved* (1927).

IX

The Realization of Shylock

A Theatrical Criticism

JOHN RUSSELL BROWN



ONE of the prime mysteries of Shakespeare's plays is their actability. When characters have been delineated and their traits numbered, when dramatic structure has been analysed as form or 'imitation', when the linguistic and musical subtlety of the dialogue has been assessed and themes or meanings have been deduced, the quality which makes his plays eminently actable may yet escape definition. If we are optimistic and untempted by the unknown we may presume that an actor will find instinctively how he can best speak Shakespeare's lines, and leave the matter there: but our appreciation will be the poorer, and the actor, when instinct fails him, will be left to founder insecurely. Moreover, our judgment of the meaning or force of a whole play may be affected: the author who wrote successful titanic parts like Titus Andronicus or Richard the Third knew his actors' resources well and could calculate when to restrain them, when to let them have full scope; he would expect a groan, a silence or a movement, if well placed, to alter the emphasis of an entire scene. But this is to speak too crudely: a knowledge of the actor's opportunities—as complex and far-ranging as the human voice and body which are his instruments—was continuously at Shakespeare's service; those who wish to understand his writings, as well as those who perform them, must try to assess their actability in the finest detail.

The importance of such considerations is well shown by *The Merchant of Venice*. Ever since 14 February 1741, when Charles Macklin persuaded the management of Drury Lane to restore Shakespeare's text in place of George Granville's adaptation and to allow him to play Shylock, this comedy has nearly always been revived for the same purpose—to give some actor the chance of playing the lead. For that is what Shylock is: although he appears in but five of its twenty scenes and not at all in the last act, he can dominate every other impression and display the powers

of many kinds of actor. He takes the final curtain-call, without Portia or Bassanio, without Antonio, the merchant of Venice. This tradition is so strong that it is easy to forget how strange it is: how odd that a villain—the one who threatens the happiness of the others—should so run away with a play that is a comedy by other signs, and that makes only a passing, unconcerned allusion to him at its conclusion. But the records are unequivocal: in the theatre it is his play. Fortunately the records are also unusually detailed, so that we are able to reconstruct the different ways in which Shylock has been given life and observe the qualities in Shakespeare's text which make this a star part. And from this inquiry, other questions arise: have ambitious actors misrepresented Shakespeare's play? is one interpretation, one reading of the actor's opportunities, more faithful than another? is a fully realized Shylock incompatible with a well proportioned *Merchant of Venice*, one that is satisfactorily concluded?



At first the part seemed to have been written especially for Macklin, as Kemble's *Memoirs* (1825) affirm:

His acting was essentially manly—there was nothing of trick about it. His delivery was more level than modern speaking, but certainly more weighty, direct and emphatic. His features were rigid, his eye cold and colourless; yet the earnestness of his manner, and the sterling sense of his address, produced an effect in Shylock, that has remained to the present hour unrivalled.

(i. 440)

It was thought that Shakespeare had drawn Shylock 'all shade, not a gleam of light; subtle, selfish, fawning, irascible, and tyrannic', and that Macklin's voice was:

most happily suited to that sententious gloominess of expression the author intended; which, with a sullen solemnity of deportment, marks the character strongly; in his malevolence, there is a forcible and terrifying ferocity.

(Gentleman, i. 291)

He cast his performance between two extremes, sullen and malevolent, and the two were linked by weight and power in his deportment and his eyes:

There was, beside his judgment which went to the study of every

line of it, such an iron-visaged look, such a relentless, savage cast of manners, that the audience seemed to shrink from the character.

(*Memoirs*, pp. 405-6)

His performance began sullenly:

when Shylock and Bassanio entered, . . . there was an awful, a solemn silence. . . . He approached with Bassanio. . . . Still not a whisper could be heard in the house. Upon the entrance of Anthonio, the Jew makes the audience acquainted with his motives of antipathy against the Merchant. Mr. Macklin had no sooner delivered this speech, than the audience suddenly burst out into a thunder of applause, and in proportion as he afterwards proceeded to exhibit and mark the malevolence, the villainy, and the diabolical atrocity of the character, so in proportion did the admiring and delighted audience testify their approbation. . . .

(Kirkman, i. 258-9)

Macklin himself spoke of the first scenes as 'rather tame and level' but:

I knew where I should have the pull, which was in the third act, and reserved myself accordingly. At this period I threw out all my fire; . . . the contrasted passions of joy for the Merchant's losses, and grief for the elopement of Jessica, open a fine field for an actor's powers, . . .

(*Memoirs*, p. 93)

For this scene with Salerio and Solanio, and then with Tubal, he 'broke the tones of utterance' and ensured that his 'transitions were strictly natural' (Kirkman, i. 264). But for the trial he reverted to what he called 'a silent yet forcible impression' (*Memoirs*, p. 93):

Macklin . . . 'stood like a TOWER,' as Milton has it. He was 'not bound to *please*' any body by his pleading; he claimed a right, grounded upon LAW, and thought himself as firm as the Rialto.¹

The kind of detail that impressed an audience can be judged from this account in a letter by a German visitor, Georg Lichtenberg, who saw Macklin in 1775:

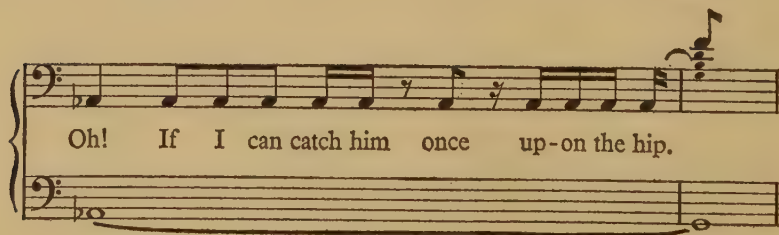
Shylock is not one of those mean, plausible cheats who could expatiate for an hour on the virtues of a gold watch-chain of pinchbeck; he is heavy, and silent in his unfathomable cunning, and, when the law is on his side, just to the point of malice. Imagine a rather stout man with a coarse yellow face and a nose generously fashioned in all three dimensions, a long double chin, and a mouth so carved by nature that the knife appears to have slit him right up to the ears, on one side at least,

¹ J. Boaden, *Memoirs of J. P. Kemble* (1825), i. 440.

I thought. He wears a long black gown, long wide trousers, and a red tricorne, after the fashion of Italian Jews, I suppose. The first words he utters, when he comes on to the stage, are slowly and impressively spoken: 'Three thousand ducats.' The double 'th', which Macklin lisps as lickerishly as if he were savouring the ducats and all that they would buy, make so deep an impression in the man's favour that nothing can destroy it. Three such words uttered thus at the outset give the keynote of his whole character. In the scene where he first misses his daughter, he comes on hatless, with disordered hair, some locks a finger long standing on end, as if raised by a breath of wind from the gallows, so distracted was his demeanour. Both his hands are clenched, and his movements abrupt and convulsive. To see a deceiver, who is usually calm and resolute, in such a state of agitation, is terrible.²

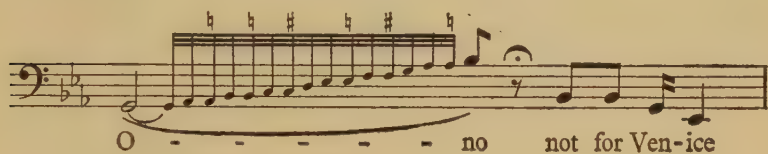
Macklin's imitators cheapened this portrait, presenting a Shylock 'bent with age and ugly with mental deformity, . . . sullen, morose, gloomy, inflexible, brooding over one idea, that of his hatred, and fixed on one unalterable purpose, that of his revenge' (Hazlitt, iv. 320-4). If this mood was relieved it was by laughter at Shylock's expense, especially in the Tubal scene which often excited 'a mixture of mirth and indignation' (Hole, p. 559). But then, on 26 January 1814, Edmund Kean played the Jew at Drury Lane with 'terrible energy'; like Macklin he established a reputation overnight and founded a new tradition.

His Shylock was not so easy to imitate, for it depended on most unusual gifts. His voice had a range 'from F below the line to F above it', its natural key being that of B \flat . His hard guttural tone upon G was said to be 'as piercing as the third string of a violon-cello', and his mezzo and pianissimo expressions as 'soft as from the voice of a woman'. This instrument he learned to control so that it gave sudden and thrilling effects: he could give 'the yell and choaked utterance of a savage:'



² Lichtenberg's *Visits to England*, tr. Margaret L. Marc and W. H. Quarrell (1938), p. 40. Reprinted by courtesy of The Clarendon Press.

At times he gave 'a torrent of words in a breath', yet with 'all the advantages of deliberation'. His pauses could give a 'grandeur', speaking 'more than the words themselves':³



Kean was fond of 'abrupt transitions . . . mingling strong lights and shadows with Caravaggio force of unreality'. He gave an irregular performance, always seeking 'points' for passion and power. This might have degenerated into trickery, but he 'vigilantly and patiently rehearsed every detail' until his artistic sense was satisfied; and he acted with his whole being, watching the effect of passion as well as its sudden expression:

a strong emotion, after discharging itself in one massive current, continues for a time expressing itself in feebler currents. . . . In watching Kean's quivering muscles and altered tones you felt the subsidence of passion. The voice might be calm, but there was a tremor in it; the face might be quiet, but there were vanishing traces of recent agitation.

(Lewes, pp. 2-8)

His arms, hands and large black eyes were, with his voice, eloquent of intelligence, spirit and power.

Kean's first scene as Shylock started, as Macklin's did, slowly, but added dignity and a crushing, sardonic humour:

From the first moment that he appeared and leant upon his stick to listen gravely while moneys are requested of him, he impressed the audience, . . . 'like a chapter of Genesis'. [Then followed] the overpowering remonstrant sarcasm of his address to Antonio, and the sardonic mirth of his proposition about the 'merry bond' . . .

(Lewes, p. 11)

As he spoke of Laban and his flock (I. iii. 72-91), he seemed 'borne back to the olden time':

Shylock is in Venice with his money-bags, his daughter, and his

³ W. Gardiner, *The Music of Nature* (1832), pp. 48-9.

injuries; but his thoughts take wing to the east; his voice swells and deepens at the mention of his sacred tribe and ancient law, . . .

But he can rapidly change:

The audience is then stirred to enthusiasm by the epigrammatic point and distinctness with which he gives the lines:

Hath a *dog* money? Is it possible
A *cur* can lend three thousand ducats?

(Hawkins, i. 129)

In Shylock's second scene, taking leave of Jessica, Kean revealed yet another facet of his powers, for in his calling 'Why, Jessica! I say' there was a 'charm, as of music' (Doran, pp. 429-30). But his chief triumph was, like Macklin's, in III. i. This became the crucial test for all succeeding Shylocks; Squire Bancroft, discussing one particular failure at the end of the century, noted that:

The fact of rushing on the stage in a white-heat frenzy, with nothing to lead up to its passion, I take it, is the main difficulty.

He had seen only Kean's son, Charles, assay it satisfactorily, and he closely reproduced his father:

Apropos of which, Mr. Wilton often spoke to me; he having once, when quite a young actor, played Tubal to the Shylock of Edmund Kean. The great actor did not appear at rehearsal, but sent word that 'he should like to see the gentleman who was to be the Tubal at his hotel'. Mr. Wilton obeyed the summons, and spoke always of the kindness with which Kean instructed him, after saying, 'We'll run through the scene, Mr. Wilton, because I'm told that if you don't know what I'm going to do I might frighten you!' Mr. Wilton described the performance as *stupendous!* and said that, although prepared beforehand, at night Kean really frightened him.⁴

For this scene Kean could use his flashing transitions; he showed, with alternate force:

Shylock's anguish at his daughter's flight; his wrath at the two Christians who make sport of his anguish; his hatred of all Christians, generally, and of Antonio in particular; and then his alternations of rage, grief, and ecstasy, as Tubal relates the losses incurred.

(Doran, p. 430)

⁴ S. B. and Marie E. Bancroft, *Mr. and Mrs. Bancroft* (8th ed., 1891), p. 212.

In the speech beginning 'He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million; . . .'

He hurried you on through the catalogue of Antonio's atrocities and unprovoked injuries to him, enforcing them with a strong accentuation, and a high pitch of voice; and when he had reached the *climax*, he came down by a sudden transition to a gentle, suffering tone of simple representation of his oppressor's manifest un-reason and injustice, on the words

'I am a Jew!' ⁵

In the trial scene was noted:

His calm demeanor at first; his confident appeal to justice; his deafness, when appeal is made to him for mercy; his steady joyousness, when the young lawyer recognizes the validity of the bond; his burst of exultation, when his right is confessed; his fiendish eagerness, when whetting the knife;—and then, the sudden collapse of disappointment and terror, with the words,—'Is *that*—the LAW?' . . .

Then, his trembling anxiety to recover what he had before refused: his sordid abjectness, as he finds himself foiled, at every turn; his subdued fury; and, at the last, (and it was always the crowning glory of his acting in this play), the withering sneer, hardly concealing the crushed heart, with which he replied to the jibes of Gratiano, as he left the court.

(Doran, pp. 430-1)

To this account must be added the return of his sardonic humour, in lines like:

An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven:
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?

(228-9)

or in, 'I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond' (262), which, according to *The Examiner*, was accompanied with a 'transported chuckle.' There was in Kean's performance, as the same journal noted, a 'union of great powers with a fine sensibility': for Macklin's malevolence he had found sardonic intellect and fiery spirit, for his sullen strength, family love and racial pride, both being subjected to suffering and pain; the whole impressed by a series of instantaneous, forceful effects. So he reversed a tradition and, for Hazlitt, Kean's Jew was:

more than half a Christian. Certainly, our sympathies are much oftener

⁵ Vandenhoff; quoted by Hillebrand, p. 346.

with him than with his enemies. He is honest in his vices; they are hypocrites in their virtues.⁶

Irving's Shylock at the Lyceum on 1 November 1879 was the next to be generally accepted as an original reading. He accentuated earlier suggestions of dignity, was venerable, lonely, grieved, austere: he moved with pride and grace; his humour was coldly cynical, rather than sardonic; his thought was meditative, not sullen, and his anger was white and tense; in defeat he called forth pity and awe. When he first played the role he bent all his effort toward gaining sympathy, but later he allowed his Shylock to become more 'hard, merciless, inexorable, terrible' (Winter, pp. 175 and 178). Irving's elevated tone was established in that early, 'tame and level' scene: his first lines were spoken half-turned away from Bassanio, in a subdued monotone, and the whole was played more deliberately than was customary, even in the sneers and expressions of anger. In III. i, to Salerio and Solanio, he spoke wildly at first, but then with the 'calm tone of desperate resolve' (Irving, p. 341). He eliminated the 'almost incessant movement [and] explosive vociferation' that was customary, but gave a 'lightning flash' at 'To bait fish withal' (56); and, after a pause of suspense, 'there ensued the torrid invective . . . uttered at first in an almost suffocated voice, . . . but presently in the fluent tones of completely liberated passion' (Winter, pp. 187-9). With Tubal he played for pathos: there was a break-down after 'would she were hearsed at my foot. . . .' (93-4), and the speech finished ('no tears but of my shedding') with sobs; on 'I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit', he tore open his robe, repeatedly striking his breast.

But unlike other Shylocks, Irving made his strongest effects in the Trial Scene. Here his dignity had full scope: he entered in dead calm, as 'a priest going to the altar', or as 'a figure of Fate—pitiless, majestic, implacable'.⁷ Yet he was also a 'lethal monster, sure of his prey, because bulwarked behind the pretence of religion and law' (Winter, p. 196); there was a:

momentary flashing out of a passionate delight, where Portia's words to Antonio, 'You must prepare your bosom for his knife,' seem to put within his grasp the object of his hate.

And both these impressions contrasted finely and surprisingly with:

the total collapse of mind and body, when at a glance the full significance of the words—'This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood'

⁶ *The Chronicle* (6 April 1816).

⁷ *The Theatre* (1879), p. 294.

(306)—burst upon his keen intellect. In these words, and what follows, he seems to receive his death-blow. . . . We feel the prop is in effect gone 'that doth sustain his life'. But he keeps a firm front to the last, and has a fine curl of withering scorn upon his lip for Gratiano, as he walks away to die in silence and alone.⁸

Yet this was not all: he moved slowly and with difficulty away, as if opposing a fatal weakness by an act of will; at the door he nearly fell, to recover and 'with a long, heavy sigh' to disappear (Winter, p. 195).

After Macklin, Kean and Irving, no one has so completely captured the public's imagination with an original Shylock. Most actors have moved somewhere within the earlier limits while frankly comic interpretations, or a woman in the role, have been short-lived eccentricities; occasionally there have been clear failures. Lewis Casson, Ernest Milton and John Gielgud have probably been the most assured and independent. Casson, performing with the Old Vic Company in 1927, stripped Shylock of romance, dignity and moral stature; this gave a 'new comic quality in his lighter scenes', and in the trial held attention without relying on purely 'theatrical effects'.⁹ St. John Ervine in *The Observer* complained that this Shylock lacked the 'magnificence of baffled rage and the courageous abandon of a man whose life is filled with despair'. But to this Casson replied that he could find neither of these qualities in Shakespeare's text: instead of dying for his religion and oath or remaining scornful to the end, Shylock replies, 'I am content,' and to Casson that was 'contemptible' conduct.¹⁰ He acted within an every-day and even petty idiom: his first scene was the 'ordinary bluff of commerce, common to all tired businessmen'; he dined with Antonio, against his religious scruples, to satisfy mere 'spite'. Casson believed that what is mean, malicious, cunning, cruel and cowardly—traits found in almost every man—draws Shylock on to his 'abominable acts', and this process he tried to portray. The performance was continuously interesting (especially to experienced playgoers), but not compelling; and it did not establish a tradition.

Ernest Milton, five years later, likewise avoided easy theatricality; he played the opening scenes lightly, but with a studied Jewishness, and then, on discovering that Jessica has fled, 'the lamp he is carrying falls from his hand and fate suddenly and savagely transforms him'.¹¹ From this point he showed more power, but without spectacular strokes, and

⁸ *Blackwood's Magazine* (Dec. 1879).

⁹ *Daily Telegraph* (18 Oct. 1927).

¹⁰ *The Observer* (23 Oct. and 24 Dec. 1927).

¹¹ *The Times* (29 April 1932).

the final prolonged moment before he leaves the court, as he looks round and 'shows his teeth in a snarl of impotent but silent hatred',¹² was one that could be successfully attempted only by an actor who had played with consistent and minute truth, and with progressive tension.

John Gielgud came to the role in 1938, influenced by a highly acclaimed Chekhov season. He thus saw his problem as that of acting 'in style', appropriate to Shakespeare's language and period, while still acting 'in character'; and as he rehearsed he came to believe that Shakespeare himself had 'obviously calculated' on this attempt, and given full scope for it.¹³ As with Casson's, some critics complained that his Shylock fell 'rather from the pavement to the gutter, than from the mountain to the abyss';¹⁴ but Gielgud had added intensity, throughout. He provoked *The New Statesman* to give a detailed account (reprinted here by courtesy of the journal):

Mr. Gielgud is riveting as the Jew, . . . most careful not to sentimentalise the part. . . . When he is on the stage you can feel the whole house motionless under the painful weight of his realism. In the trial scene he obliged us to suspend disbelief in the impossible story, and when he stropped his knife upon his shoe, we were appalled, not by fear for Antonio, but by the sight of hatred turned to madness. His appearance throughout was extraordinary—gummy, blinking eyes, that suggested some nasty creature of the dark, and loquacious hands with as many inflections as his voice. 'But stop my house's ears,' 'I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor,' 'I am not well'—the intensity with which he delivered such phrases lingers in the memory.

Shylock could sustain Chekhovian attention to detail, and could evoke pathos without sentimentality, intensity without theatricality.

★ ★ ★

Literary critics might complain that these various Shylocks tell more about the 'pitiful ambition' of the actors who invented them than about Shakespeare's play. They could cite, in evidence, the 'No, no, no!' which Kean added after his ' . . . would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin!', or Irving's interpolated scene of Shylock's return at night after Jessica's escape, to knock at his closed door and wait as the curtain fell.¹⁵ But as surely as such additions alter Shakespeare's play, so

¹² *Daily Telegraph* (29 April 1932).

¹³ Cf. an interview in *The Observer* (3 April 1938).

¹⁴ *The Saturday Review* (30 April 1938).

¹⁵ Cf. A. C. Sprague, pp. 24 and 22.

surely did the interpretations they serve arise from that play: all these Shylocks, despite their contradictions, exist only in and through *The Merchant of Venice*; nothing else could inspire them or support them. The text itself shows how they exploit opportunities given to the actor by Shakespeare.

Shylock's entry is delayed until the third scene, when the audience has already seen Antonio, Bassanio and Portia. The heroine leaves the stage with tripping doggerel:

Come Nerissa. Sirrah, go before.

Whiles we shut the gates upon one wooer, another knocks at the door.

and Shylock enters with Bassanio, or, rather Bassanio with Shylock, for the Jew but echoes him:

SHYLOCK: Three thousand ducats; well.

BASSANIO: Ay, sir, for three months.

SHYLOCK: For three months; well.

BASSANIO: For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

SHYLOCK: Antonio shall become bound; well.

BASSANIO: May you stead me: will you pleasure me? shall I know your answer?

SHYLOCK. Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound.

BASSANIO. Your answer to that.

While this is pedestrian exposition on the printed page, it is not so when acted. Of course, repetition without variation would deflate the 'strongest' scene; but no actor would be guilty of that in this situation. Shylock first contrasts in slow movement and speech with the departing Portia and Nerissa; thus a distinct impression is made at once and the very flatness of the words arouses curiosity. Then as Bassanio becomes more impatient—'Ay, sir, . . .' and 'as I told you'—Shylock's repetitions, in his own tempo and intonation, assure the audience that this man has his own time and his own thoughts; he even neglects the three urgent questions to repeat earlier points yet again. And in distinguishing his delivery from Bassanio's, the actor can find many suggestions from the text. As Lewis Casson played him, he is a canny businessman by flat repetitions drawing his client out to show how much he needs the money. For Macklin, the echoing would be sullen and heavy, a slow savouring of 'it now appears you need my help' (l. 115). With Kean they would show a sharper satisfaction on the twice repeated 'Antonio

bound', supported by 'I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him' (l. 48), and:

Fast bind, fast find;
A proverb never stale in thrifty mind.
(II. v. 54-5)

The repetitions need 'sub-texts', or 'under-meanings', in order to sustain the introduction of the new character, and the text abundantly supplies them. Probably the stronger they are, the closer they will be to Shakespeare's intention. The ambiguous 'well's' (variously printed as exclamations or questions by editors) can serve to allow two under-meanings to each speech: the repetition of Bassanio's words can thus be so private with hatred that the 'well' is a necessary declension towards conversation; or the repetition could be falsely bland and the 'well' spoken aside, voicing the private satisfaction. In any case the effect of thus introducing Shylock with thoughts and feelings not directly expressed in the words themselves is to awaken a precise curiosity, an intense focus, as the audience watches for explicit statement.

If so far only the privacy of Shylock's thoughts has been fully established, the duologue at once proceeds to further complication:

SHYLOCK: Antonio is a good man.

BASSANIO: Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

SHYLOCK: Oh, no, no, no, no: . . .

The emphatic reply suggests that the Jew is surprised at being misunderstood, or pretends to be, and this is used to add to the impression of guile which may already be implicit in the way in which he made Bassanio talk. At once he explains patiently:

. . . no, no: my meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. . . .

Shylock's intellectual superiority is nicely established by this elaboration, and by the ironic tone of 'good' and 'sufficient'. And the impression is strengthened by the ease with which he proceeds to make the rich merchant seem a bad security, by his pedantic and humorous enumeration of risks, his parenthetical explanation, and his final show of modesty—'I think I may take his bond.' Bassanio's short-phrased and, perhaps, short-tempered reply—'Be assured you may'—enhances Shylock's control by contrast; and the repetitive rejoinder:—'I will be assured I may'—gives opportunity for re-impressing the ominous under-meanings of the opening.

So far the dramatic issues have been most strongly expressed through contrasts and a controlled manner of speaking, but then Shylock is stung by a chance word of Bassanio's:

SHYLOCK: . . . May I speak with Antonio?

BASSANIO: If it please you to dine with us.

Possibly the invitation is diffident, for it implies a show of familiarity with someone the speaker despises; but, however it is spoken, Shylock's reply has contrast enough in its forceful vocabulary and phrasing, and in the sudden, scornful particularization of 'Yes, to smell pork; to eat . . .' The projected bargain is forgotten, apparently by a stronger impulse:

. . . to eat of the habitation which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into. I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. What news on the Rialto?

His sharp, piled-up phrases culminate in his first allusion to religious observances in 'pray with you'; then, as if by force or a recall to immediate concerns, there is a sudden anti-climax in 'What news on the Rialto?' and, quickly, the feigned ignorance of 'Who is he comes here?' The *power* of Shylock is first shown in this sudden gust of utterance so firmly subdued; and its cause is not money or personal animosity, but race and religion. As Bassanio briefly identifies Antonio and joins him, Shylock is left alone for a soliloquy which, at last, expresses directly what has hitherto been suggested under the lines, by 'sheer acting'; Shakespeare has prepared for this moment the audience's curiosity and expectation.

Yet as Shylock speaks now with the greater control of verse, all is not made plain. His hatred, avarice and cunning become unequivocal, but there is a confusion about the grounds of hatred. The first statement is quick, as if unstudied:

I hate him for he is a Christian.

But the second, while claiming to be more important, has a show of reason which makes it sound considered rather than passionate:

But more for that in low simplicity
He lends out money gratis and brings down
The rate of usance here with us in Venice.

His next phrase, 'If I can catch him once upon the hip', is both an everyday idiom and a possible allusion to Jacob's wrestling with the angel

(*Gen.*, xxxii); certainly it is no casual thought, for it awakens, in 'I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him', the physical idea of devouring as a beast, linked with the solemn connotations of 'ancient'. Then racial consciousness is uppermost again with 'He hates our sacred nation'; and, as this new intensity echoes in tempo and words the first rush of feeling, so it also is followed more reasonably, with parenthesis and enumeration:

. . . and he rails,
Even there where merchants most do congregate,
On me, my bargains and my well-won thrift,
Which he calls interest.

The soliloquy concludes sharply:

Cursed be my tribe,
If I forgive him!

The actors were all, in their partial interpretations, responding to the opportunities of the text: the Shylock who confronts Antonio has had opportunities for inviting an intense and precise scrutiny, of suggesting cunning, avarice, deliberation, power and control—and a hatred that is private and considered, and also irrational and uncontrolled. And in all this he towers—in force, intellectual fineness and quick sensation—over Bassanio, the romantic hero.

With Antonio present he still dominates the scene and calls the tune. As Bassanio recalls him from soliloquy he makes a sudden transition to blandly assumed simplicity and forgetfulness. He can taunt Antonio by reminding him that he breaks his principles in asking for money on interest. He can test the importance of the loan by making Antonio listen to a detailed story of Laban and Jacob, his ancestors, and at the same time show his isolation by being himself absorbed in it. When Antonio turns aside to talk to Bassanio, he can draw him back, simply by mentioning 'Three thousand ducats'. Moreover he shows that he has a keener awareness of the situation than Antonio: the Christian's assumed and brief courtesy—'shall we be beholding to you?'—is answered with sharp mockery and imitation, and a scornful reminder that he has been kicked and spat upon; he even imitates the fawning reply which Antonio seems, somewhat naïvely, to expect. The Christian deals shortly with Shylock to good purpose, because he hates his avarice and cruelty and because he is thinking of his friend, but little is said or done to draw the audience's attention to this; the handling of the scene makes the audience follow Shylock, for he most fully, consecutively and immediately responds to the situation.

Antonio now drops his pretence to Shylock and, dilating on truly generous friendship as his love for Bassanio allows him to do, asks for the loan 'as to an enemy'. The two men are irreconcilable, but, whereas Antonio sounds annoyed, Shylock is self-possessed and knows that, in 'a merry sport', he can now propose his bond for the forfeit of a pound of flesh if the debt is not repaid in three months. He seems to have arranged the *impasse* purposely: the audience will have been reminded by his mockery that he seeks to catch Antonio 'on the hip' and will now intently watch his hypocritical finesse and relish:

Why, look you, how you storm!
I would be friends with you and have your love.

The ploy works and, after more mockery, he leaves the stage, ostentatiously busy with mundane considerations. He has given a new direction and uncertainty to the action, and the brief comments that follow his privately triumphant exit only accentuate the danger by suggesting that Antonio and Bassanio underestimate the inflexible hatred and the cunning management of this man.

Shylock is allowed to grow in the audience's knowledge independently of the other major characters, for while he is often spoken of during the next two acts, he is seen only with minor characters until just before the trial. With Launcelot and Jessica he appears in a new setting, his own household. He easily dominates this scene, still isolated ('Who bids thee call?'), sarcastic at Antonio's expense (expecting his 'reproach'), concerned with his race ('By Jacob's staff, I swear'); and, in a short time, much is added to his realization on the stage—chiefly his concern and affection for his daughter. Characteristically there are no long, gentle speeches to enforce this, but the lines demand its enactment. Hatred of the Christian is expressed by his willingness to 'eat pork' to further it and by an allusion to fabulous tales of Jews eating Christian flesh:

I am not bid for love; they flatter me:
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon
The prodigal Christian.

From this build-up of hatred there is a sudden transition:

Jessica, my girl,
Look to my house.

Its rapid contrast, the simplicity of 'my girl' at the line-ending, the suspicion implied in 'Look to my house', show Shylock exposed,

touched, in need for the first time. This must be the right reading, for now he can express fear:

I am right loath to go:
There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,
For I did dream of money-bags to-night.

The 'money-bags' turns the subject to one in which the audience may laugh at Shylock as a mere miser, but only after the sudden transition to tenderness and fear has brought them more closely at one with him than before. Macklin's solemnity, the musical 'charm' of Kean's voice and Irving's dignity, all found scope here. The scene proceeds to show Shylock concerned that Jessica shall not hear the music of the masque nor 'gaze at Christian fools with varnish'd faces', and watchful for his 'sober house'. And during this the audience is made aware at least twice that his daughter is about to rob him and escape from the home she calls a 'hell'. So now the audience is forced to see that Shylock is limited in knowledge, ignorant about the affection for which he has shown his need. After this disclosure, challenging and therefore reawaking earlier ones, the issues are briskly drawn forward, and Shylock leaves intent on 'Fast bind, fast find'; no other character in the play holds comparable interest for the audience in his own development, as distinct from that of the action and interplay of characters; Shylock alone has such unforeseeable responses.

The opportunities for the actor in the scene with Salerio and Solanio, and then Tubal, are well known, but the points of emphasis need to be distinguished. The disorder of Shylock's first entry, wild with grief and anger is an overwhelming visual contrast to his early control. His immediate and direct reproach to the gossiping young men and their freedom to quip and jest at his expense represent loss of cunning and command. His outright self-exposure:

My own flesh and blood to rebel! . . . I say, my daughter is my flesh and blood.

shows him impervious to mockery and shame. However much he later laments his loss of money and jewels, all these unguarded, unpremeditated moments show the centre of his grief: his family, home, authority, race. And thus his heart is alarmingly exposed. The two young men turn the talk to Antonio and this provokes the first of the great 'transitions' of the scene, used to such powerful effect by Macklin and Kean; the change is to mocking scorn of Antonio, but this develops

to a hope of revenge, and his scorn then returns. Yet now he openly lists Antonio's deeds which he counts injuries, and this halts only for the second, and greater, transition:

. . . cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason?
I am a Jew.

Then through the rest of the speech—remarkable for its range of sensation, from laughter to tears and thoughts of death, for its sarcasm and its plea for acceptance as a human being (his reasoning in this respect is much like Henry the Fifth's before Agincourt¹⁶)—he draws away from this fact to a still more sustained threat of villainy and revenge. The mere release of energy, of crowded and baffling impressions, makes this unanswerable; the young men go without reply, quickly responding to a message from Antonio. Shylock stands now, silent, alone, unapproachable; the actor can, and must, hold the whole theatre silent.

Tubal, a fellow Jew, enters and with him Shylock, still unexhausted, has a series of transitions between grief (for the loss of his daughter and his ducats) and pleasure (in the 'good news' of Antonio's losses). He concludes it after Tubal's account of Jessica's exchange of a ring for a monkey. This must be the climax of the scene, not only by its position but also because here alone Shylock remembers an uncommitted past ('I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor') and sees the difference between himself and his daughter: 'I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys'. The last phrase may be a wry or helpless jest; certainly 'wilderness' seems to release from his unspoken thoughts, as such a jesting might, a sense of desolation.¹⁷ The overwhelming effect of these feelings upon him is shown in his reaction to Tubal's next piece of news about Antonio: this time, instead of exulting, he makes deliberate and practical plans to 'have the heart of him'. Shylock is now so alone, intemperate, inhuman and assured, that, if the scene were acted slackly, it would be absurd: with almost grotesque earnestness, he twice appoints Tubal to meet him 'at our synagogue'—again words which touch his deepest feelings—and he does not wait for an answer. For this central manifestation of Shylock—a moment of clarity and powerful utterance, an opportunity for Irving's pathos and Kean's terror—Shakespeare has also contrived the impression that he is driven by feelings too deep to be

¹⁶ Cf. *H5*, IV. i. 105–15.

¹⁷ At the time of writing *The Merchant of Venice*, the connotations of this word for Shakespeare appear to have been desolation and savagery: cf. 2 *H6*, III. ii. 360, *Tit.*, III. i. 54, and 94, 2 *H4*, IV. v. 137 and *Lucr.*, 544.

resisted or fully uttered, or even understood. The Jew at once dominates the play and makes it appear unable to contain him; the emotions which seem to drive and threaten him cannot be made fully articulate in its words.

Before the trial, a short scene (III. iii) shows that the manacled Antonio confronting Shylock is resigned to death, if only Bassanio will return. However, this is already known from his letter, and a more important development is the return of Shylock's sardonic humour in this scene, and the emphasis it gives to his inflexible intention to 'have his bond'. By this means, when Shylock enters the court-room silent and alone to listen to the duke's last plea, and when he makes his politely and solemnly phrased reply, the audience can at once recognize the deadly inhumanity underneath, behind his 'performance'. So his long taunting speeches and sharp rejoinders alike show confidence and composure without concealing his savage, fixed intent. Shylock's stature is maintained to the last possible moment (here Irving's dignity had strong effect) and, in contrast, Bassanio's most generous sentiment is lightly mocked by Portia and considered a trifle by Shylock. At first only Antonio is not belittled, but this is through lofty resignation, the acceptance of himself as the 'tainted wether of the flock, Meetest for death'; he seems to live outside the issues of the court-room. In her disguise, of course, Portia withstands Shylock, and with the plea for mercy—more solemn and sustained than any of his speeches—brings before him the antithesis of his hatred: but he is unmoved and, once more, demands the forfeit. His defeat, therefore, comes very suddenly, by a verbal quibble as he is about to kill the silent Antonio; the surprise is instantaneous and as thrillingly dramatic as Claudius' 'Give me some light', or Hal's 'I know thee not'. Portia and Shylock are for the second time opposed and, as it were, spot-lit.

It may at first seem strange that Shylock should be denied any words with which to express his immediate reaction to the reversal in full measure; yet this is the very means by which Shakespeare has drawn almost all the audience's interest to him once more. He collapses physically as Portia elaborates the case against him and then, after Gratiano has had time to taunt him, there is probably a moment of total silence (the break of the verse-line suggests this) before he speaks, incredulously: 'Is that the law?' On the other side they now speak in turn, but he alone faces them and they must wait for his answers; there are more pauses, in some of which Gratiano mocks him or Portia questions. Except for the garrulous Gratiano, his opponents do not speak of their joy in victory, and the reunion of Antonio and Bassanio takes place out of the dramatic

focus—this Shylock holds, until he leaves the stage. As the audience waits on his words to satisfy their interest, they will watch closely and see that he is inwardly struggling to understand and come to terms: rapidly he tries two bolt-holes and then a plea for death. But there is no escape and he must listen to his full sentence and the utmost mercy of his enemies, which is a life of poverty and the outward acceptance of his daughter's husband and his enemies' religion. The verbal conclusion of his role is:

I am content

and

I pray you, give me leave to go from hence;
I am not well: send the deed after me,
And I will sign it.

The speeches are brief but, in the intensified focus, they suggest a renewed control—a dignity (especially in the assurance of fulfilling his word), or a new, hidden purpose (as of suicide or revenge), or an accepted hopelessness. And there is yet the silence in which Shylock leaves, hearing the duke's curt command and Gratiano's jibe: this cannot fail to impress the audience, at least for his physical weakness as he moves slowly and with difficulty, and probably for his restraint and isolation in saying nothing more; and if he turns towards Gratiano for a moment only, there will be an impression of rekindled scorn for such Christians, or of now-impotent hatred. The slow, silent exit is an unmistakable invitation for the actor to reinforce at the conclusion the salient traits of his characterization; and it was surely meant to be powerfully affecting, for Shakespeare immediately changed the subject, providing a contrast in relieved inquiries about dinner-engagements.¹⁸ Shylock departs from the play, as he entered it, with an intense focus upon him; and now there is no doubt that his being is more fully and deeply apprehended than his words alone can suggest; his is a part that must be realized in acting.

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By many devices Shakespeare has ensured that in performance Shylock is the dominating character of the play; none other has such emotional range, such continual development, such stature, force, subtlety, vitality, variety; above all, none other has his intensity, isolation, and apparent depth of motivation. The various interpretations that

¹⁸ Cf. Menenius' attempt at a similar change of subject; *Coriol.*, IV. ii. 49.

have become famous do not overgo the intended impression but rather fall short, owing to some limitation of the actor.

This dominance often does ill service to the play as a whole. Thematically, of course, it is well balanced: Shylock's desire to 'get as much' as he thinks he 'deserves' contrasts with Bassanio's choice of the casket which enjoins to 'give and hazard' all he has; his claim that the pound of flesh is 'dearly bought; 'tis mine and I will have it' (IV. i. 100) contrasts with Portia's attitude represented by 'Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear' (III. ii. 316) as she parts from Bassanio; his careful avarice contrasts with Antonio's bold generosity; his pursuit of hatred with the pursuit of love and friendship. But the audience's interest is liable to be one-sided: there is nothing in comparable terms to balance Shylock's presence, and the last act can seem dull or trivial without him.

Many courses have been tried in the attempt to make a satisfactory whole in performance. Antonio's friendship for Bassanio, which runs throughout the play, has been given special emphasis in productions from Arthur Bouchier's to Tyrone Guthrie's. But then Antonio's part seems underwritten: he has little variety of mood, he does not state the cause of his melancholy in soliloquy as Shylock does the cause of his hatred, and his parting from Bassanio is only reported by others. In the last act, when he sees Portia claiming the friend for whom he 'only loves the world' (II. viii. 50), his separation has a potential dramatic interest comparable to Shylock's isolation at the end of the trial when he has lost 'the means whereby he lives' (IV. i. 376-7): but this interest is not exploited; the audience's view is directed to the general scene, and Antonio's loss is not given even the passing emphasis of lines like those addressed to Jaques and Don Pedro, isolated characters at the end of the other comedies. It is easy to invent devices for drawing attention to Antonio's plight, but then he remains disconcertingly, because unemphatically, dumb—it looks like an author's mistake.

Other ways of trying to balance the play have included a special emphasis on Portia. Here there is a danger of forcing the early witty scenes and so giving the part an exaggerated gamesomeness: Sybil Thorndike once said that Portia had a 'continual facetiousness' that 'tires me beyond words'.¹⁹ On the other hand, if authority can be gained when she is a lawyer this does help to balance interest in the trial scene. But this is only half an answer, for she makes light of this role in the last act and can do little there to sustain and resolve the interest her adversary has aroused. Of course, it is possible to underplay Shylock throughout;

¹⁹ *Evening Standard* (20 Jan. 1930).

but this is wasteful. Or he can be turned into a comic figure, as Max Reinhardt tried in a German version; but, since he is treated too seriously by the other characters to be comic alone, this involves fantasticating the whole play against the nature of much of its dialogue.

The Merchant of Venice is probably most satisfying as a whole if all the characters are played for all they are worth and the last act presented as if on two levels of acceptance, thus using the unemphasized memory of Shylock to give ironic comment or a sense of perspective. To attempt to use all the opportunities offered to an actor of Shylock would give a balance within the character which it too often lacks: his humanity can counteract his cruelty, his power his isolation, his wrongs his rights. It should be possible to play Shylock so that the audience's tendency to feel for him is balanced by its tendency to turn away from his cruelty and hatred. And if Antonio is played fully, without added emphasis, he can sustain a continuing interest and contrasts in the background, as it were, of more lively and assertive elements. With Portia the problem is to find a graceful style for the wit which will allow her good sense, courage and warm affection to be expressed as well: it must be shown that she knows before the trial that to 'offend and judge' are distinct offices and can scarcely afford a single acceptance, and that deliberate fools lose what they seek by their very wit in pursuing it (II. ix. 61-2 and 80-81); her strong affection for Bassanio must be seen struggling with her modesty, and at the moment of his choosing she must be able to speak the noble and yet fearful description of him as

young Alcides, when he did redeem
The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
To the sea-monster: I stand for sacrifice;
The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives,
With bleared visages, oome forth to view
The issue of the exploit. . . .

(III. ii. 55)

The earlier casket scenes are usually played for incidental comedy extracted from the wooers, but if Portia is their centre the accepted curb on the 'living daughter . . . by the will of a dead father' (I. ii. 26-7) can help to make the audience concerned with her fortunes throughout the action.

The need to play all the parts for all they are worth extends to minor characters. For example, Solanio and Salerio have important lines about Antonio and Shylock and must not seem merely talkative and callow;

again a graceful style is needed so that their description of Antonio's concern in the first scene may be listened to for its good sense as well as its attempt to enliven their friend—it contains, among other ideas, the knowledge that something of great worth may in an instant be 'worth nothing', a premonition of a whole sequence of crises later in the play. If they are so acted, their baiting of Shylock will suggest a greater reversal and their silence after his cry for vengeance will be the more eloquent. There is little risk that *The Merchant of Venice* will thus become solemn from too much concern; the wit will be lighter if it is graceful, and the speed of the several developments, the variety of moods and tempos, the artificial (or fairy-tale) clarity and transformations of the casket scenes and the trial, all ensure otherwise.

In the fifth act the dominant quality of the dialogue and action is quick and, despite the misunderstandings, delighted and gay. Certainly Antonio remembers how once he 'did lend' his body for Bassanio's wealth, but he is ready, apparently lightly enough, to do so all over again (ll. 249–53). Yet the persistent memory of Shylock in the minds of the audience (quickened, but not allayed, by two thoughtless references to him) need not seem extraneous within the whole. For there are other reactions that are evoked behind the dialogue, and can thus join with this memory to give ironic depth to the total scene: Antonio's loneliness is one, the lovers' mutual faith and content behind their quarrels is another. But the reaction most able to answer, or contain, the memory of Shylock is a response to the music played on stage welcoming Portia back to Belmont and, presumably, playing again as the lovers walk off together at the end. Music had been heard earlier at the crucial moment of Bassanio's choice of the caskets and now the opening dialogue of the fifth act between Jessica and Lorenzo likens Belmont's music to that of the spheres, a heavenly harmony which immortal souls cannot hear while they are closed within their 'muddy vesture of decay' (ll. 58–65); behind worldly affairs there is harmony in the heavens, as behind the dialogue of the play and its busy action there is music. When Portia first enters in the last act, she is given time to note the more powerful effect of lights which shine alone and the added sweetness of music played in silence (ll. 89–118), and thus again, with almost pedantic clarity, Shakespeare reminds the audience that behind an earthly harmony lies another that is perfect, that behind the conclusions of the fifth act is a further peace, one which may resolve and contain all apparent discords. If the right, reverently harmonious music plays at the end of the comedy (too often the music chosen is perky or sugary), it may

awaken the audience's responses behind the immediate dialogue; and with its image of divine harmony may be blended a perception of the lovers' underlying confidence and Antonio's loneliness, and a memory of pity and terror aroused by Shylock, who had called the music of his enemies a 'shallow foppery'. Thus the fifth act can suggest a deep perspective stretching away behind the easy, heartening talk of the lovers; in its vast dimensions there is scope for a recollection of the fullest realization of Shylock.

Note

First Editions. For details of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice* see the pre-notes to Chapters VIII and IX respectively. *Much Ado about Nothing* appeared in quarto in 1600, but *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* are texts first provided in the First Folio of 1623 (for details of facsimiles see the pre-note to Chapter II). This group of plays is generally considered to comprise Shakespeare's 'mature' comedies: the following chapter deals, in some detail, with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night*.

Modern Editions. For editions of the first two plays see the respective notes, as above: *Twelfth Night* is available in the New Cambridge Shakespeare (1930; reprinted 1949).

Scholarship and Criticism. General studies of the comedies and their sources have been listed in the pre-note to Chapter II. The study of the sources can be very revealing and there are essays in G. Bullough's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources . . .* that go beyond their brief and greatly illuminate the plays: see, for example, the discussion of *As You Like It* in Vol. II, which makes use of J. Shaw's discussion of Fortune and Nature in that play, *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1955). C. T. Prouty has a full examination of *The Sources of Much Ado About Nothing* (1950).

Among recent general studies may be mentioned J. R. Brown's *Shakespeare and his Comedies* (1957), on which there is a review-article by Frank Kermode in *Essays in Criticism* (1958), and C. L. Barber's *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (1959) which discusses all the comedies in the context of holiday custom and misrule, developing ideas originally borrowed from folklore and the Cambridge School of anthropology by Janet Spens in her essay on *Shakespeare's relation to Tradition* (1916). Two books of Enid Welsford, *The Court Masque* (1927) and *The Fool* (1935) are relevant.

Paul A. Olsen has written one of the fullest accounts of the meaning of court marriage in connection with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in *English Literary History* (1957), and the article has a valuable bibliography: P. F. Fisher has written on the argument of the play, *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1957), and George A. Bonnard on the purpose and structure in *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* (1956). The Introduction to the New Arden edition of *The Merchant of Venice* is valuable for that play, and on *Twelfth Night* there is a fresh account, by L. G. Salingar, of its complication and design, in *Shakespeare Quarterly* (1958).

X

The Mature Comedies

FRANK KERMODE

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THE purpose of this chapter is briefly to characterize the mature comedies; and more, to suggest that they are the best of the comedies and that they do not often have the common good luck to be read decently. Nobody will want a demonstration that *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* are better plays than *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Comedy of Errors*, but the view that this group is in important ways superior to the 'Romances' is unorthodox, and it might be useful to start with a few remarks on *Cymbeline*. I speak only of an isolated aspect of *Cymbeline* but believe my conclusions to be applicable also to *The Tempest*.

Few would disagree that the plot of *Cymbeline* is monstrous—and it might even be called a fantastic design made by a past-master for the sake of showing that he could do pretty well anything. Some of the difficulties of *Cymbeline* can best be explained on that supposition. Much of the verse in the play has undoubtedly that special harsh excellence which goes with what Mr. John Wain has called Shakespeare's 'mature manner of kinaesthetic unification'.¹ But sometimes it is very strange; it draws attention to its own opacity. An example of this is the performance of Iachimo, who first approaches Imogen with such energetic obliquity that she cannot catch his drift (I. vii). Cloten is also addressed in verse so difficult that he can only strain feebly after its meaning. Thus his mother counsels him:

Frame yourself
To orderly soliciting, and be friended
With aptness of the season; make denials
Increase your services; so seem as if
You were inspired to do those duties which
You tender to her; that you in all obey her,

¹ 'The Mind of Shakespeare' in *More Talking of Shakespeare*, ed. J. Garrett (1959), pp. 159-72.

Save when command to your dismissal tends,
And therein you are senseless.

(II. iii. 51)

Cloten, imagining some insult, replies only with 'Senseless? Not so'. Less than a hundred lines on Imogen repulses him in these terms:

His meanest garment,
That ever hath but clipp'd his body, is dearer
In my respect than all the hairs above thee,
Were they all made such men.

(138)

and again Cloten hangs on to the insult, a real one this time; he seizes one expression, 'His mean'st garment', and will not let it go. 'His garment! . . . His garment! . . . His meanest garment! . . . His mean'st garment! Well!' The object of this is not to inform us of Cloten's stupidity; he often talks pretty kinaesthetically himself. But out of his failure to understand Shakespeare's mature verse there develops a remarkable bout of dramaturgical juggling. Posthumus' clothes begin to usurp the stage. It is true that they connect with a certain thematic interest in the play—the relation between nature and nurture, and between truth and seeming. Metaphors from clothes are commonly used for these purposes. But the way in which they are used here does not, I think, contribute to our understanding of those themes, if only because they are so wantonly complicated. For instance: the physique of Posthumus is that of a nonpareil; but that of Cloten equals it. Finding the headless body of Cloten dressed in the clothes of Posthumus, Imogen identifies the corpse as her husband's not only by the garments but by the physique:

A headless man! The garments of Posthumus!
I know the shape of 's leg; this is his hand;
His foot Mercurial; his Martial thigh;
The brawns of Hercules; but his Jovial face—
(IV. ii. 308)

The clothes fit him. All his difference from Posthumus is concentrated in his head, which is accordingly given specially rough treatment by the King's sons. The moral of this is obviously not that 'Thersites' body is as good as Ajax/When neither are alive'; indeed it is hard to see any moral at all. And the more one looks at all the to-do about clothes, the more difficult it becomes. Cloten dressed himself as Posthumus in order to satisfy a curious desire to enjoy Imogen in her husband's clothes and

then 'cut them to pieces before her face'. He declares this intention first in III. v. to Pisanio, and then in a strange soliloquy:

Why should his mistress, who was made by him that made the tailor, not be fit too? the rather—saving reverence of the word—for 'tis said a woman's fitness comes by fits. Therein I must play the workman. I dare speak it to myself—for it is not vain-glory for a man and his glass to confer in his own chamber—I mean, the lines of my body are as well drawn as his; no less young, more strong, not beneath him in fortunes, beyond him in the advantage of the time, above him in birth, alike conversant in general services, and more remarkable in single oppositions.

(IV. i. 3)

But he is overcome by the true princes, dressed in skins. Shortly afterwards Posthumus, who on his departure was movingly described as waving a handkerchief, enters carrying a bloody handkerchief, and informs us that he proposes to change his clothes:

I'll disrobe me
Of these Italian weeds and suit myself
As does a Briton peasant.

(V. i. 22)

This will enable him to exhibit 'more valour . . . than my habits show' and set a new fashion 'less without and more within'. In this garb he defeats the astonished Iachimo, seeming to be only 'a very drudge of nature's' (V. ii. 5). Iachimo's error is that of the other characters; the King himself confesses that he had mistaken his queen, and 'thought her like her seeming' (V. v. 4). It is a small mouse to come of such labour. The whole thing has an air of wilful contrivance. It is a long way round to explain how Cloten is inferior to both Posthumus and the princes; the effect is entirely different from the use of clothes in *Lear*, and forces one to regard it as a deliberate technical excess: a bravura piece, an example of the master doing something difficult—the intertwining of a theme in texture and structure—with very great ease and for its own sake. The same disinterested mastery is, I think, equally evident in *The Tempest*; Strachey was wrong, but not as wrong as it is pleasant to believe. Shakespeare was at this time less interested in the great issues which had touched him and called forth incomparable technical resource; now he was more interested in the technical means than their end.

That the Shakespeare of the last plays should have developed an intense preoccupation with formal problems, a remarkable sophistication of means, is not surprising if one thinks of the demands on his technical

equipment during the early years of the new century: he had worked out the incredibly original movement of *Macbeth*, the revolutionary plotting of *Hamlet*, the contrapuntal mazes of *Lear*. The apparatus was fascinating in its own right. Perhaps, if we looked carefully for marks of this peculiar detachment, we should find them to a lesser degree in *As You Like It* and in *Twelfth Night* also—at the point where, with *Hamlet* and *Troilus*, radical new experiment ended a period of his work. But one may still think of those plays as belonging to a time when Shakespeare in comedy was capable of doing extraordinary and beautiful things *at full pressure*; the cause of his inventions being not technical display but the true comic theme. And this is the sense in which one could legitimately say that the best of the 'mature' comedies are technically superior to all that came later; I should myself be prepared to maintain that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is Shakespeare's best comedy.

With this play, and with *Twelfth Night*, criticism—inhibited from the start by an historical failure to take the comedies seriously—has been curiously slow to take the hint of the titles. From the normal licence of St. John's Eve to the behaviour of Shakespeare's young lovers in the dark wood is a short step; Hardy must have been aware of it when he wrote the twentieth chapter of *The Woodlanders*, but only recently have critics taken their cue from Frazer and seen something of the full import. What one needs to add to this naïve theme is the recognition of an intense sophistication. It is still probably too much to expect many people to believe that the theme of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can be explained by references to Apuleius, to Macrobius and Bruno and so forth, and this is not the place to defend such modes of explanation, though they need defending as much as any others, including the view that the play means nothing much at all. Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that it is a play of marked intellectual content; that the variety of the plot is a reflection of an elaborate and ingenious thematic development; and that simple and pedestrian explanations of such developments have some value.



A Midsummer Night's Dream opens with a masterly scene which, as usual in the earlier Shakespeare, establishes and develops a central thematic interest. The accusation against Lysander is that he has corrupted the fantasy of Hermia (32), and the disorders of fantasy (imagination) are the main topic of the play. Hermia complains that her father cannot see Lysander with her eyes; Theseus in reply requires her to

subordinate her eyes to her father's judgment (56-7) or pay the penalty. She is required to 'fit her fancies to her father's will'. All withdraw save Lysander and Hermia, who utter a small litany of complaint against the misfortunes of love: 'So quick bright things come to confusion'. This recalls not only *Romeo and Juliet* but also *Venus and Adonis* (the whole passage from l.720 to l.756 is related to *Midsummer Night's Dream*). This lament of 'poor Fancy's followers' gives way easily to their plot of elopement. Helena enters, in her turn complaining of ill-fortune; for Demetrius prefers Hermia's eyes to hers. Hermia leaves: 'we must starve our sight/From lover's food till morrow deep midnight.' Lysander, remembering that Helena 'dotes/Devoutly dotes, dotes in idolatry' (108-109) on Demetrius, departs, expressing a wish that Demetrius will come to 'dote' on Helena as she on him (225). The repetition of the word 'dote', the insistence that the disordered condition of the imagination which is called 'love' originates in eyes uncontrolled by judgment; these are hammered home in the first scene, and the characteristic lamentations about the brevity and mortality of love are introduced like a 'second subject' in a sonata. Finally Helena moralizes emblematically:

And as he (Demetrius) errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
 So I, admiring of his qualities:
 Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
 Love can transpose to form and dignity:
 Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind;
 And therefore is wing'd Cupid painted blind:
 Nor hath Love's mind of any judgment taste;
 Wings and no eyes figure unheedy haste;
 And therefore is Love said to be a child . . .

(230)

In love the eye induces 'doting', not a rational, patient pleasure like that of Theseus and Hippolyta. Helena is making a traditional complaint against the blind Cupid;² love has nothing to do with value, is a betrayal of the quality of the high sense of sight, and is therefore depicted blind, irresponsible, without judgment. Later we shall see the base and vile so transformed; love considered as a disease of the eye will be enacted in the plot. But so will the contrary interpretation of 'blind Love'; that it is a higher power than sight; indeed, above intellect. *Amor . . . sine oculis dicitur, quia est supra intellectum.*³

² See E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (1939), pp. 122-3, and p. 122, n.74.

³ Pico della Mirandola, quoted in Wind, *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance* (1958), p. 56.

The themes of the play are thus set forth in the opening scene. Love-fancy as bred in the eye is called a kind of doting; this is held to end in disasters of the kind that overtook Adonis, Romeo, Pyramus; and the scene ends with an ambiguous emblem of blind love. The next scene introduces the play of the mechanicals, which, in a recognizably Shakespearian manner, gives farcical treatment to an important thematic element; for Bottom and his friends will perform a play to illustrate the disastrous end of doting, of love brought to confusion. Miss Mahood has spoken of Shakespeare's ensuring that in *Romeo and Juliet* 'our final emotion is neither the satisfaction we should feel in the lovers' death if the play were a simple expression of the *Liebestod* theme, nor the dismay of seeing two lives thwarted and destroyed by vicious fates, but a tragic equilibrium which includes and transcends both these feelings'⁴; and in *Midsummer Night's Dream* we are given a comic equilibrium of a similar kind. The 'moral' of the play is not to be as simple as, say, that of Bacon's essay 'Of Love': there it is said to be unreasonable that a man, 'made for the contemplation of heaven and all noble objects, should do nothing but kneel before a little idol, and make himself subject, though not of the mouth (as beasts are) yet of the eye, which was given them for higher purposes'. Shakespeare's conclusion has not the simplicity of this: 'Nuptial love maketh mankind; friendly love perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth and embaseth it.' Yet, for the moment, the theme is blind love; and the beginning of the second act takes us into the dark woods. If we are willing to listen to such critics as C. L. Barber,⁵ we shall take a hint from the title of the play and attend to the festival licence of young lovers in midsummer woods. Also we shall remember how far the woods are identified with nature, as against the civility of the city; and then we shall have some understanding of the movement of the plot. Puck is certainly a 'natural' force; a power that takes no account of civility or rational choice. He is, indeed, a blinding Cupid; and the passage in which he is, as it were, cupidinized is so famous for other reasons that its central significance is overlooked:

That very time I saw, but thou couldst not,
Flying between the cold moon and the earth,
Cupid all arm'd; a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,

⁴ *Shakespeare's Wordplay* (1957), p. 72.

⁵ *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton U.P. 1959).

As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
 But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
 Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
 And the imperial votaress passed on,
 In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
 Yet mark'd I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
 It fell upon a little western flower,
 Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound,
 And maidens call it love-in-idleness.
 Fetch me that flower; the herb I shew'd thee once:
 The juice of it on sleeping eye-lids laid
 Will make or man or woman madly dote
 Upon the next live creature that it sees.

(II. i. 155)

The juice used by Puck to bring confusion to the darkling lovers is possessed of all the force of Cupid's arrow, and is applied with equal randomness. The eye so touched will dote; in it will be engendered a fancy 'for the next live thing it sees'. Puck takes over the role of blind Cupid. The love he causes is a madness; the flower from which he gets his juice is called '*Love-in-idleness*', and that word has the force of wanton behaviour amounting almost to madness. The whole object is to punish Titania 'and make her full of hateful fantasies' (II. i. 258); and to end the naturally intolerable situation of a man's not wanting a girl who wants him (260-1). Puck attacks his task without moral considerations; Hermia and Lysander are lying apart from each other 'in human modesty' (II. ii. 57) but Puck has no knowledge of this and assumes that Hermia must have been churlishly rejected:

Pretty soul! She durst not lie
 Near this lack-love, this kill-courtesy.

(II. ii. 76)

Lysander awakes; his anointed eyes dote at once on the newly arrived Helena. He ingenuously attributes this sudden change to a sudden maturity:

The will of man is by his reason sway'd;
 And reason says you are the worthier maid . . .
 Reason becomes the marshal to my will
 And leads me to your eyes . . .

(115)

But in the next scene Bottom knows better: 'Reason and love keep little company nowadays'.

It is scarcely conceivable, though the point is disputed, that the love-affair between Titania and Bottom is not an allusion to *The Golden Ass*. In the first place, the plot of Oberon is like that of the Cupid and Psyche episode, for Venus then employs Cupid to avenge her by making Psyche (to whom she has lost some followers) fall in love with some base thing. Cupid, at first a naughty and indecent boy, himself becomes Psyche's lover. On this story were founded many rich allegories; out of the wanton plot came truth in unexpected guise. And in the second place, Apuleius, relieved by the hand of Isis from his ass's shape, has a vision of the goddess, and proceeds to initiation in her mysteries. On this narrative of Apuleius, for the Renaissance half-hidden in the enveloping commentary of Beroaldus, great superstructures of platonic and Christian allegory had been raised; and there is every reason to suppose that these mysteries are part of the flesh and bone of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The antidote by which the lovers are all restored 'to wanted sight' is 'virtuous' (III. ii. 367), being expressed from 'Dian's bud', (IV. i. 70) which, by keeping men chaste keeps them sane. So far the moral seems to be simple enough; the lovers have been subject to irrational forces; in the dark they have chopped and changed like the 'little dogs' of Dylan Thomas's story, though without injury to virtue. But they will awake, and 'all this derision/Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision' (III. ii. 370-1). Oberon pities the 'dotage' of Titania, and will 'undo/This hateful imperfection of her eyes' (IV. i. 66); she will awake and think all this 'the fierce vexation of a dream' (72) and Puck undoes the confusions of the young lovers. In the daylight they see well, and Demetrius even abjures the dotage which enslaved him to Hermia; his love for Helena returns as 'natural taste' returns to a man cured of a sickness (126 ff.). They return to the city and civility. All are agreed that their dreams were fantasies; that they have returned to health. But the final awakening of this superbly arranged climax (as so often in the mature Shakespearian comedy it occurs at the end of the fourth act) is Bottom's. And here the 'moral' defies comfortable analysis; we suddenly leave behind the neat love-is-a-kind-of-madness pattern and discover that there is more to ideas-in-poetry than ideas and verse.

I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was: man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream . . . The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report, what my dream was.

(IV. i. 202)

It must be accepted that this is a parody of 1 Corinthians ii. 9 ff.:

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him . . .

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth . . .

Apuleius, after his transformation, might not speak of the initiation he underwent; but he was vouchsafed a vision of the goddess Isis. St. Paul was initiated into the religion he had persecuted by Ananias in Damascus. What they have in common is transformation, and an experience of divine love. Bottom has known the love of the triple goddess in a vision. His dream is of a different quality from the others'; they have undergone what in the Macrobian division (*Comm. in Somn. Scip.*, I. 3.) is called the *phantasma*: Brutus glosses this as 'a hideous dream' (*J. Caesar*, II. i. 65). But Bottom's dream is *oneiros* or *somnium*; ambiguous, enigmatic, of high import. And this is the contrary interpretation of blind love; the love of God or of Isis, a love beyond the power of the eyes. To Pico, to Cornelius Agrippa, to Bruno, who distinguished nine kinds of fruitful love-blindness, this exaltation of the blindness of love was both Christian and Orphic; Orpheus said that love was eyeless; St. Paul and David that God dwelt in darkness and beyond knowledge.⁶ Bottom is there to tell us that the blindness of love, the dominance of the mind over the eye, can be interpreted as a means to grace as well as to irrational animalism; that the two aspects are, perhaps, inseparable.

The last Act opens with the set piece of Theseus on the lunatic, the lover, and the poet. St. Paul speaks of the 'hidden wisdom' 'which none of the princes of this world know', which must be spoken of 'in a mystery'; and which may come out of the learned ignorance of 'base things of the world, . . . which . . . God hath chosen' (1 Cor., ii). Theseus cannot understand these matters. In lunatics, lovers and poets, the imagination is out of control; it is the power that makes 'things unknown', as, so this orthodox psychologist implies, these are the disordered creations of the faculty when reason, whether because of love or lunacy or the poetic *furor*, is not in charge of it. The doubts of Hippolyta (V. i. 23 ff.) encourage us to believe that this 'prince of the world' may be wrong. The love of Bottom's vision complements the rational love of Theseus; Bottom's play, farcical as it is, speaks of the disasters that do not cease to happen but only become for a moment farcically irrelevant,

⁶ E. Wind, *op. cit.*, pp. 57 ff.

on a marriage day. 'Tragical mirth . . . hot ice and wondrous strange snow' are terms not without their relevance; and the woods have their wisdom as well as the city.

Thus, without affectation, one may suggest the *skopos* of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—the thematic preoccupation, the characteristic bursting through into action of what seems a verbal trick only (the talk of eyes). Unless we see that these mature comedies are thematically serious we shall never get them right. And it might even be added that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is more serious in this way than *Cymbeline*, because the patterns of sight and blindness, wood and city, phantasma and vision, grow into a large and complex statement, or an emblematic presentation not to be resolved into its component parts, of love, vulgar and celestial. I should here mention the excellent essay on this play by Paul A. Olsen⁷ who interprets the Macrobian dreams differently, and pays no attention to Apuleius or the imagery of eyes; on the other hand he has much to say about Oberon, the themes of conventional marriage entertainments, and the contrast between sensuality and married love. My own feeling is that he sacrifices too much to the view that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a very courtly play, and I do not think that we ever find in Shakespeare the kind of allegory he is looking for; he makes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a slightly more diffuse *Hymenaei*. At present, however, the comedies may stand to lose less by over- than by under-interpretation, and Olsen's is one of the best essays on a Shakespearian comedy I have ever read. One may hope that it will be influential, but that others may point to simpler meanings that are overlooked because of our bondage to an old tradition: the tradition of Shakespeare's 'natural' genius, still potent in respect of the earlier comedies, and still capable of preventing us from studying him as an artist.



It is my intention to write with equal simplicity of *Twelfth Night*, but it would be wrong to suggest that only in the festive comedies does one find these methods employed, and so I may be allowed briefly to make the point that *The Merchant of Venice* is similarly designed. The point is that all the comedies are 'problem' comedies; that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is a legend of Friendship, (see, for instance, *Faerie Queene*, iv. 9.

⁷ 'A Midsummer Night's Dream and the meaning of court marriage' (*English Literary History* (1957) pp. 95-119). Many of the points I make above are made by Mr. Olsen (I may mention that my own reading is one I have long developed in lectures; this is to some extent a concurrence of independent testimony).

2-3, which could be a prologue to Shakespeare's play), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of love, *As You Like It* of courtesy, and *The Merchant of Venice* of justice. It is a much simpler play than *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. We are not likely, whether or no we share his high opinion of Shakespeare as a comic writer, to fall into Johnson's error when he dismissed the reiteration of the word 'gentle' in this play as only another example of Shakespeare's weakness for this 'fatal Cleopatra', the pun. 'Gentleness' in this play means civility in its old full sense, nature improved; but it also means 'Gentile', in the sense of Christian, which amounts, in a way, to the same thing. Here are some of the passages in which it occurs:

Hie thee, gentle Jew.

The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind. (I. iii. 178)

If e'er the Jew her father come to heaven,
It will be for his gentle daughter's sake. (II. iv. 34)

(Jessica is also called 'gentle' in I. 19)

Now, by my hood, a Gentile [gentle] and no Jew. (II. vi. 51)

... to leave a rich Jew's service and become
The follower of so poor a gentleman. (II. ii. 756)

The Duke urges Shylock to be merciful; asking him not only to

loose the forfeiture,
But, touch'd with human gentleness and love,
Forgive a moiety of the principal. . . .
We all expect a gentle answer, Jew. (IV. i. 24)

Other 'gentle' objects are Antonio's ships, and Portia, many times over; and Portia speaks of mercy as a 'gentle rain'.

There is a straightforward contrast between gentleness, the 'mind of love', and its opposite, for which Shylock stands. He lends money at interest, which is not only unchristian, but an obvious misdirection of love; Antonio ventures with his ships, trusts his wealth to the hand of God (and so they are 'gentle' ships). It is true that a Jew hath eyes etc.; this does not reduce the difference between man and man, when one is gentle and the other not. To make all this clear, Shakespeare twice inserts the kind of passage he later learned to do without; the kind which tells the audience how to interpret the action. It is normal to cut these scenes in acting texts, but only because these plays are so grossly misunderstood. The first such is the debate on Genesis, xxxi. 37 ff. (Jacob's

device to produce ringstraked, speckled and spotted lambs) which occurs when Antonio first asks for the loan (I. iii. 66 ff.). The correct interpretation of this passage, as given by Christian commentators on Genesis (see A. Williams, *The Common Expositor*, 1950), is that Jacob was making a venture ('A thing not in his power to bring to pass,/But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of heaven'; compare *Faerie Queene*, V. iv). But Shylock sees no difference between the breeding of metal and the breeding of sheep—a constant charge against usurers (see J. R. Brown's note on the passage in his Arden edition, where he rightly points out that this was commonplace). Later, in II. viii, we have a pair of almost Spenserian *exempla* to make this point clear. First Solanio describes Shylock's grief at the loss of daughter and ducats; he cannot distinguish properly between them, or lament the one more than the other. Then Solario describes the parting of Antonio and Bassanio; Antonio urges Bassanio not even to consider money; the loss of Bassanio is serious, but he urges him to be merry and not to think of Shylock's bond. When love is measured out, confused by the 'spirit of calculation' (R. B. Heilman's phrase in his discussion of the errors of Lear),⁸ the result is moral chaos.

Bassanio's visit to Belmont is frankly presented as a venture, like Jason's for the Golden Fleece; and the theme of gentle venturing is deepened in the scenes of the choice of caskets. The breeding metals, gold and silver, are to be rejected; the good lead requires that the chooser should 'give and hazard all he hath'. Morocco (II. vii) supposes that Portia cannot be got by any casket save the golden one, tacitly confusing her living worth with that of gold, the value of gentleness with that of the best breeding metal. Arragon (II. ix—the intervening scene contains the lamentation of Shylock over his daughter-ducats) rejects gold out of pride only, ironically giving the right reasons for despising the choice of the 'many', that they are swayed not by Truth but by Opinion, a mere false appearance of Truth, not Truth itself. (In this sense the Jews are enslaved to Opinion.) He chooses silver because he 'assumes desert', another matter from trusting to the hand of God; and his reward is 'a shadow's bliss'. After another scene in which Shylock rejoices over Antonio's losses and again laments Jessica's treachery, there follows (III. ii) the central scene of choice, in which Bassanio comes to 'hazard' (2) and 'venture' (10) for Portia. The point of the little song is certainly that in matters of love the eye is a treacherous agent, and can mistake substance for shadow. Bassanio, rejecting the barren metals which appear to

⁸ 'The Unity of King Lear' in *Critiques & Essays in Criticism 1920-1948*, ed. R. W. Stallman, (1949), pp. 154-161; and see Heilman, *This Great Stage* (1948).

breed, avoids the curse of barrenness on himself (for that is the punishment of failure); and he finds in the leaden casket Portia's true image. The scroll speaks of the 'fortune' which has fallen to him (133). Portia, in her happiness, speaks of Bassanio's prize as not rich enough, deploring the poorness of her 'full sum' (158); and Gratiano speaks of the forthcoming marriage as the solemnization of 'the bargain of your faith'. Bassanio the merchant has 'won the fleece'; but at the same moment Antonio has lost his (243-4). Bassanio is 'dear bought', as Portia says; but Antonio will not have him return for any reason save love: 'if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter' (322).

At this point the conflict between gentleness (Antonio's laying down his life for his friend) and a harsh ungentle legalism becomes the main burden of the plot. Shylock demands his bond; this is just, like Angelo's strict application of the law against fornication in the hard case of Claudio. It is, in a way, characteristic of Shakespeare's inspired luck with his themes that Shylock in the old stories will take flesh for money. There is no substantial difference: he lacks the power to distinguish gold, goat's flesh, man's flesh, and thinks of Antonio's body as carrion. The difference between this and a 'gentle' attitude reflects a greater difference:

DUKE: How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

SHYLOCK: What judgement shall I dread, doing no wrong?

(IV. i. 87)

There is no need to sentimentalize this; as Shakespeare is careful to show in *Measure for Measure* the arguments for justice are strong, and in the course of Christian doctrine it is necessarily satisfied before mercy operates. Mercilla has her blunted sword, but also the sharp one for punishment, and she 'could it sternly draw' (*Faerie Queene*, V. ix. 30). Shylock has legally bought his pound of flesh; if he does not get it 'there is no force in the decrees of Venice' (IV. i. 102). But as heavenly mercy is never deserved, it is an adornment of human authority to exercise it with the same grace:

. . . earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That, in the course of justice, none of us
Should see salvation.

(196)

But this plea does not work on the stony unregenerate heart; Shylock persists in the demand for justice, and gets it. Like any other human

being, he must lose all by such a demand. In offering to meet the demands of strict justice (in accordance with the Old Law) Antonio will pay in blood the price of his friend's happiness; and it cannot be extravagant to argue that he is here a type of the divine Redeemer, as Shylock is of the unredeemed.

Shakespeare's last act, another 'thematic' appendix to the dramatic action, is motivated by the device of the rings. It begins with a most remarkable passage, Lorenzo's famous 'praise of music'. In this are treated 'topics' which, as James Hutton shows in an extremely important study,⁹ are all evidently the regular parts of a coherent and familiar theme—so familiar indeed, that Shakespeare permits himself to treat it 'in a kind of shorthand'. The implications of this 'theme' are vast; but behind it lies the notion, very explicit in Milton's 'Ode at a Solemn Musick', of the universal harmony impaired by sin and restored by the Redemption. The lovers, in the restored harmony of Belmont, have a debt to Antonio:

You should in all sense be much bound to him,
For, as I hear, he was much bound for you.
(V. i. 136)

In such an atmosphere the amorous sufferings of Troilus, Thisbe, Dido and Medea are only shadows of possible disaster, like the mechanicals' play in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Antonio on his arrival is allowed, by the *contretemps* of the ring-plot, to affirm once more the nature of his love, standing guarantor for Bassanio in perpetuity, 'my soul upon the forfeit' (V. i. 252). *The Merchant of Venice*, then, is 'about' judgment, redemption and mercy; the supersession in human history of the grim four thousand years of unalleviated justice by the era of love and mercy. It begins with usury and corrupt love; it ends with harmony and perfect love. And all the time it tells its audience that this is its subject; only by a determined effort to avoid the obvious can one mistake the theme of *The Merchant of Venice*.

★ ★ ★

One could perhaps not say so of *Twelfth Night*, a subtler play, and one in which Shakespeare's sophistication of method is already impressively evident. Pepys was fantastically wrong in calling it 'but a silly play, and not at all related to the name or day'; it is another 'festive' comedy.

Two aspects (at least) of *Twelfth Night* celebrations are relevant to the theme of this play: the licence of appetite beyond what is normal

⁹ 'Some English Poems in Praise of Music', *English Miscellany* II (1951), 1-63.

(licensed misrule), and the confusion of authority and identity consequent upon ritual observances akin to those of the Boy Bishop.¹⁰ The second of these interests led Shakespeare (as John Manningham perhaps noticed) to write a play 'much like the Comedy of Errors, or Menechmi in Plautus, but most like and neere to that in Italian called *Inganni*'. In fact, Shakespeare's most immediate debt was to Riche's *Apolonius and Silla*; but, as G. Bullough says, 'adaptations of Plautus were many in Italy, and *Twelfth Night* belongs to a tradition in which the Plautine twins became differentiated in sex, thus affording a greater variety of intrigue'.¹¹ The interest of this pre-history lies in Shakespeare's pre-occupation with the comedy of mistaken identity, first as a brilliant apprentice-imitator in *Comedy of Errors*, later with an increasingly deep brooding over the truth hidden in the dramatic convention; for, if it is accepted that all our dealings with reality are affected by an inability certainly to distinguish between what is said and what is meant, between things as they are and as they appear to be, between Truth and Opinion, then the comic errors develop a peculiar relevance to life itself.

Here follow examples of confusion:

VIOLA: I am not that I play. Are you the lady of the house?

OLIVIA: If I do not usurp myself, I am.

VIOLA: Most certain, if you are she, you do usurp yourself.

(I. v. 196)

Thou canst not choose but know who I am (II. v. 152)

(The postscript of the trick letter to Malvolio; he *can* choose, and chooses wrong.)

Who you are and what you would is out of my welkin

(III. i. 64)

(Feste to Viola, followed by her remarks on the wise fool.)

VIOLA: you do think you are not what you are.

OLIVIA: If I think so, I think the same of you.

VIOLA: Then think you right; I am not what I am.

OLIVIA: I would you were as I would have you be!

VIOLA: Would it be better, madam, than I am?

(III. i. 151)

Youth, whatsoever thou art, thou art but a scurvy fellow (III. iv. 161)

(Sir Andrew's challenge to Viola.)

¹⁰ Details of these customs are everywhere available and indeed well known from such works as Chambers' *Medieval Stage*, and Welsford's *The Fool*.

¹¹ *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, II (1958), 270.

as the old hermit of Prague, that never saw pen and ink, very wittily said to a niece of King Gorboduc, 'That that is is'; so I, being master Parson, am master Parson; for, what is 'that' but that, and 'is' but is? (IV.ii. 15)

(Feste about to torment Malvolio, claiming to be what he is not.)

No, I do not know you . . . Nothing that is so is so (IV. i. 5)
(Feste to Sebastian.)

Be that thou know'st thou art (V. i. 209)
(Olivia to Viola.)

One face, one voice; one habit and two persons!
A natural perspective that is and is not! (V. i. 223)

(Orsino, at the confrontation of Sebastian and Viola. A 'perspective' was an optical toy; the picture was different as viewed from one side and the other.)

And so forth. This is not a mere verbal trick. It is reinforced in the language: Sir Andrew's tautology, proved wrong by the other revellers — 'to be up late is to be up late' (II. iii. 5); the language of the taunting clown, like that of the menacing Belsey Bob in the Mummers' Plays: 'it hath bay windows as transparent as barricados, and the clerestories toward the south north are as lustrous as ebony' (IV. ii. 36).

The plot of the play turns, of course, on the errors arising from the apparent sameness of Sebastian and Viola; what appears to be so is not so. Similarly Orsino and Olivia are deceived by their own appetites (see the opening speech and II. iv. 96 ff.; also the clown's comment earlier in the scene). Orsino's love and Olivia's mourning are, as the wise fool says, foolish. The wise fool himself is a centre of paradoxes, carefully pointed out by Viola:

For folly that he wisely shows is fit;
But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit.
(III. i. 74)

Sir Andrew is a mock-knight, 'dubb'd with unhatched rapier and on carpet consideration' (III. iv. 257), with none of the powers he pretends to. Malvolio is a mock gentleman ('as I am a gentleman' IV. ii. 88). Viola ('I see you what you are' I. v. 269) and Sebastian ('This *is* the air; that *is* the glorious sun;/This pearl she gave me, I do feel 't and see 't;/And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus,/Yet 'tis not madness, IV. iii. 1 ff.) retain their grasp of reality; they each play shadow to the

other's substance. Yet in the duel the mock knight challenges the mock man; to be knight and coward, woman and man at once is no more out of the way than to be at once wise and foolish, like Orsino, Olivia and Feste. The only character who is held to be precisely what he seems to be is Viola's captain:

. . . though that nature with a beauteous wall
Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee
I will believe thou hast a mind that suits
With this thy fair and outward character.
I prithee, and I'll pay thee bounteously,
Conceal me what I am . . .

(I. ii. 48)

The climactic scene is the tormenting of Malvolio; a mock-madman teased by a mock-priest, and in the language of twelfth-night madness, or, for that matter, 'midsummer madness', as Olivia says (III. iv. 61). Here, under the volley of nonsense, Malvolio, though deserving to be the butt of Misrule, achieves some dignity by his claim that he thinks 'nobly of the soul' and is no madder than the others; no madder, at any rate, than a fool.

Over this play, as over *As You Like It*, are the shadows of Fortune and Nature at strife; Fortune rules the outside ('Fortune forbid my outside have not charm'd her!') and Nature the true quality (II. iv. 83 ff.). To call *Twelfth Night* a play about self-knowledge or the possibility of it in a world where Fortune domineers and appetite confuses, would be to put it too simply; out of the comic errors, out of the Plautine twins, has come a comedy of identity, set on the borders of wonder and madness. It is a more subtle play than either *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *The Merchant of Venice*; the work of a great artist engrossed in the examination of his medium. The ancient theme gives rise to profound technical experiment (much as the almost contemporary *Hamlet* is a fiercely experimental play on an old subject) and we can see how the same hand later would set itself master-problems in dramaturgy almost entirely for the sake of solving them, as in *Cymbeline*.

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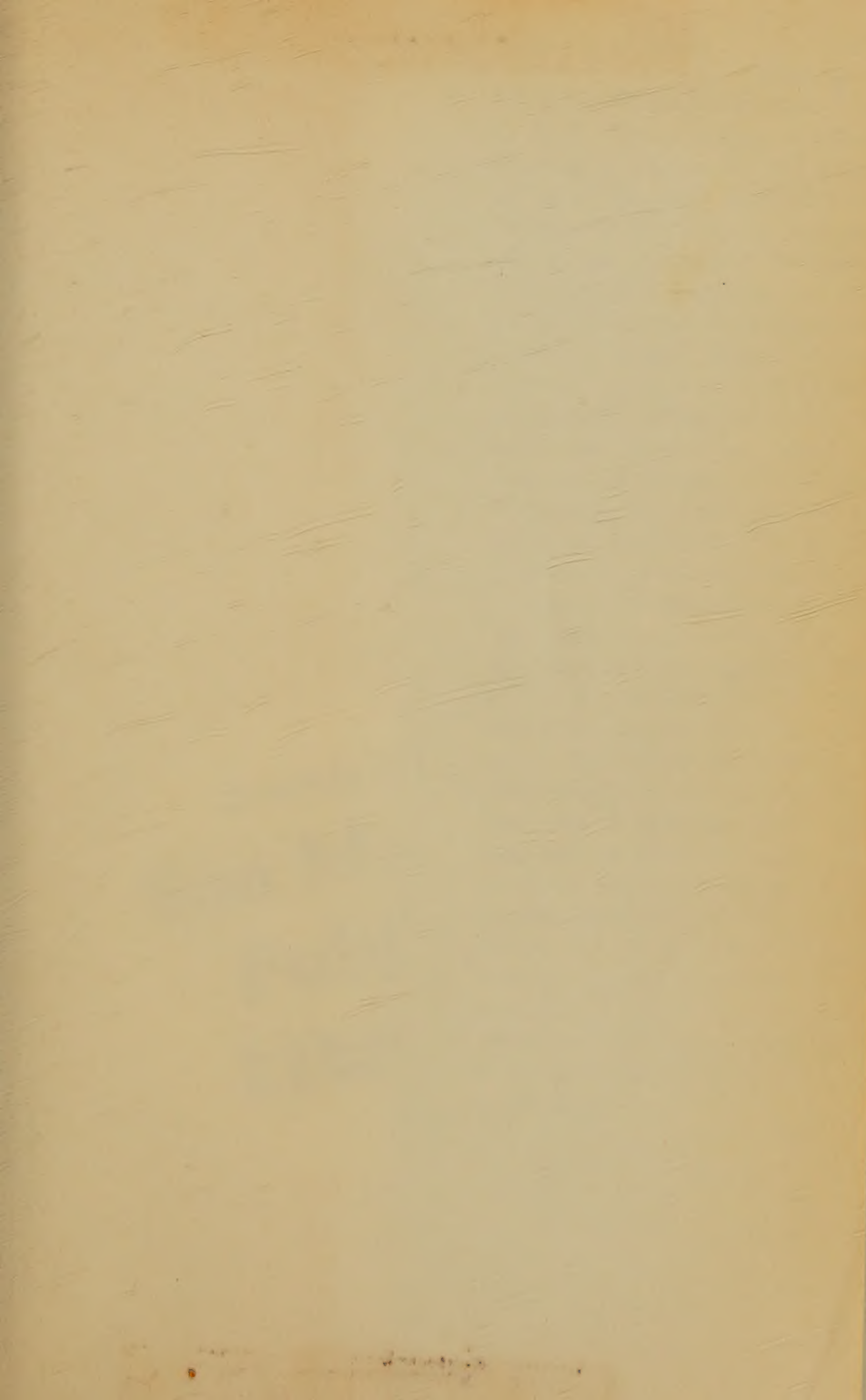
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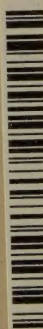
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